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THE
SQUIRE OF BEECHWOOD.

A TRUE TALE.

BY
"SCRUTATOR."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1857.

J. Billing, Printer, 103, Hatton Garden, London, and Guildford, Surrey.

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THE SQUIRE OF BEECHWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

MARY now reflected how foolishly and perversely she had acted, in following Miss Archer's advice, and that to a mind like his, her conduct must have appeared frivolous and heartless in the extreme. If her mother also had been offended by her levity, what must *he* think, to whom she had behaved so rudely?

Miss Dundonald, reading in her friend's altered looks what was passing in her mind, put her arm within hers, and whispered—

"Mary, dear, you are more like yourself now, than I have seen you this whole evening."

"Lucy," she replied, as the tears stood in her eyes; "how madly, how frivolously I have behaved—*You* even will despise me, as I do myself."

"No, Mary, dear, I pity you from my heart—and him too, poor fellow;—but, oh! for your own sake, be *yourself* once more, and never copy the detestable manners of those girls."

"No, Lucy, never again will I do such violence to my own feelings; but I thought to punish him for his indifference, and have punished myself ten times more."

"Not more, Mary; but remember it will take time to obliterate the recollection of this night's folly from such a mind as Harry Howard's;—and now, my love, I must put on my cloak, as the carriage is waiting."

"But tell me, Lucy, as I saw you sitting with him on the sofa, do you think he does love me still?"

"Yes, indeed he does, Mary; but his feelings

have been sadly lacerated to-night, and you know his dislike to those Miss Archers; the future depends on your own conduct—so now, farewell.”

Harry Howard staggered under the blow he had received that evening, like a drunken man; and as he thought of the pure-minded, beautiful girl, so confiding, so affectionate, whose image had been so long entwined about his heart, and compared her with the flirting, heartless one who had trampled on his feelings, then, he wept in agony. But calmer and better thoughts succeeded.

“No!” he exclaimed; “I will not desert her even now — although so changed. She may want, and *will* want a friend more than ever, and that she shall ever find in me, or those Archers will be her ruin.”

Harry almost repented, at first, having accepted Mrs. Selwyn’s invitation for the Friday; but on second thoughts, considered he might have an opportunity of weaning her from such dangerous companions.

The week passed. He was on his road to Elm Grove once more, but with altered views, to win her back, if possible, by kindness.

On entering the drawing-room, Harry offered her his hand with a kind, although rather melancholy smile, and sat down by her side, talking with her until dinner was announced, when he handed her to the table. She was herself once more ; the quiet, cheerful, unaffected girl of other days, although more reserved than usual. The *Archer* manners had disappeared—Harry wanted to know more, and renewed the subject.

“Does Miss Maitland purpose taking lessons in riding with Mr. Mead next summer?”

“Why do you ask that question, Mr. Howard?”

“For a woman’s reason, there can be no better, because I wish to know.”

“Well, I think not,” she said ; “second thoughts are sometimes best.”

“Then, Miss Maitland, if you really require them, I will, with pleasure be your instructor.”

“Thank you ! Mr. Howard, for your kind offer, which I will gladly accept.”

“There are other lessons you fancied yourself in need of, when we last met,” added Harry ; “and I perceive your instructress still here ; do you think you are likely to be improved by them ?”

She was annoyed at this question, and made no answer.

“You do not reply, Miss Maitland — does silence give consent ?”

“No,” she said ; “certainly not.”

“I hoped so,” said Harry ; “and will only add, that when you wish to render yourself doubly fascinating in the eyes of those who esteem you, imitate Miss Archer.”

This was uttered in a low and impressive tone, and Miss Maitland trembled at his voice.

“Come,” said Harry, “you eat no dinner. I will make no further allusion to the past ; but you must take a glass of wine with me for old acquaintance sake, and as a token of amity. Now, to change the subject—Your poor old

pony, which was sent some time ago, unknown to you, to be destroyed at our kennels, is still alive and well, and he will carry you yet, in our first riding lessons next summer."

Mary's eyes filled with tears, as she thought of her old favourite, and Harry's kindness.

"How very good of you," she replied, "to take such care of him."

"Harry Howard, Miss Maitland, is not the brute Miss Archer would wish you to believe him, although he cannot refrain sometimes from kicking a little, when goaded by such a gadfly as she is. Her insolence to me I readily forgive, but I never will forgive her attempts to drag you into her detestable meshes. Your personification of Louisa was so true to nature, and inimitable in the comedy of 'Old Friends with New Faces,' performed at Elm Grove, Friday night last, that even your old friend, Miss Dundonald, was perfectly electrified, and your mamma gazed in astonishment at her own daughter. When may we expect a repetition of the performance?" asked Harry, archly.

"Never," she replied firmly, raising her eyes to his for a moment, and then dropping them hastily again.

"Rejoiced am I, for your own sake, at this avowal," replied he, "although, perhaps, Robert and a few others, may be disappointed. Talking of riding—you have heard, I dare say, that my cousin is still staying with us, to whom I have been giving some lessons in horsemanship. She has proved an apt pupil, and now rides beautifully."

An unpleasant sensation crept over Mary's heart, as she said—

"Oh, yes; I hear of your riding every day with her."

"That is not exactly true," rejoined he, "for I have many other things to attend to; but as she is rather a favourite of my father's, I bestow as much time upon her as I can afford."

"Your long absence then, from Elm Grove, is easily accounted for," added Miss Maitland, in a tone of pique.

"Not so," replied Harry; "my cousin has not been the sole cause of that absence."

The rising of the ladies from table prevented further remarks, and the conversation was not again renewed that evening.

Harry Howard returned home in a more cheerful state, although not satisfied as to Miss Maitland's real sentiments towards him, or her stability of character. The warm current of his feelings had been checked at the fountain head, and it would take time before they could flow again in their usual channel; his confidence in her strength of mind to resist the evil influence of the world's votaries, was shaken also by her late adoption of Miss Archer's manners, which, although now repented of, and laid aside, could be resumed at pleasure. Harry resolved, therefore, to await the further development of her character, and restrain, if not subdue entirely, his own feelings.

The winter season had now returned, and the family at Elm Grove again removed to their residence in Bath, for the approaching festivities, and it was on their first arrival there that Miss Maitland was informed (on the best authority,

of course,) that Mr. Harry Howard was decidedly engaged to be married to his cousin, and that the match was approved of by his father. Mrs. Selwyn also gave her opinion, that it was very likely to happen; which augmented poor Mary's misery so much, that she retired to her own room, and there gave vent to the most bitter lamentations.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "thus ends my happiness for life; but to see him married to another is insupportable — I cannot endure that. Let me go anywhere, until this heavy trial is past—here I cannot now remain."

At this moment, Miss Dundonald, who had called and been told by Mrs. Selwyn that her daughter was in her room, ran up stairs and announced herself, without knocking at the door.

"Why, Mary in tears again! What is the matter, my dear?"

"Oh! Lucy, it is all too true. He is going to be married."

"Nonsense, my dear; I won't believe a word of it. Who told you?"

“ Oh, Mrs. Chaunter, from the best source.”

“ Of course, my dear, her news always is ;— but pray do not be so credulous. I’ll engage there is not a word of truth in this report ; but as I shall see Mr. Power at the rooms on Thursday, he will be sure to tell me all about it. So now, dry your tears and come with me for a little walk.”

The subject of the two friend’s conversation may be easily imagined.

Harry Howard’s conduct, and surprise at his absence from the gay city.

“ Well, that is nothing extraordinary, after all,” said Miss Dundonald ; “ he never was a very gay man, and likes the country and its amusements far better than those of the city ; but we shall have him again after Christmas, so now, Mary dear, we will change the topic. Will you go with me to the rooms on Thursday ? It is to be a good ball, and there we shall meet John Power, and you can ask him a few questions yourself about the absentee, if you prefer it.”

This plan was fixed upon.

Being the first fashionable assembly of the season, the rooms on this occasion were well filled, and Miss Maitland's reappearance in public was hailed with delight by her former admirers, who were profuse in their compliments.

Robert Howard was of course all attention ; but when dancing with her, he commented on the Miss Archers' visit to Elm Grove.

"One of them, I confess," said Bob, "(you know which I mean)—it did rather surprise me even to meet there, after what has occurred."

"I assure you," replied Miss Maitland, "her presence was totally unexpected by us, and mamma was very much annoyed."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Robert, in his careless manner ; "but it is what you might have expected, when *you* went and stayed with them ;" (an emphasis being laid on the word *you*). "I am not very thin skinned," added Bob, "but certain limits cannot be passed in genteel society with impunity."

"If Robert Howard," thought Mary, "can express himself thus, oh ! what must his cousin's opinion be, who is so particular ?"

His absence required no other explanation ; the cause of it burst at once upon her.

John Power had engaged her hand for the next quadrille, and, as she expected, soon began talking about Harry and hunting.

"Oh !" she said, in as careless a tone as she could assume—"I am told he is going to be married to his cousin."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed John Power ; "some of this Bath gossip, I suppose."

"Do you think it true ?"

"Yes," added John, with a little pause to notice the effect ; "as true as that I am going to be married to her myself. By Jove ! it's a good joke," and he laughed in his quiet way. "I'll tell Harry how the old Bath tabbies have disposed of him."

"I hear he is very attentive to her," she added.

"To be sure he may be, or ought to be ; as

his father's guest, and own cousin also, but he is not in love with her for all that, Miss Maitland; and if I know Harry Howard, his heart's idol is in this house, and not a hundred yards from John Power—at least, she was his idol some little time ago, and Harry don't change so quickly as some people fancy—but he is a queer fellow in his attachments. I'll just tell you a little anecdote of him. He has a favourite bull dog, or bull lady—well, that is an Irishism, any way—but it is a female of that species, and a very pretty one too, which he brought up from a puppy. Well, one day, he was romping and playing with this favourite, when (bull dogs are like ladies, you must know, sometimes very capricious in their tempers) she suddenly seized him by the arm, and held him as in a vice (these dogs seldom let go their hold), hanging from his arm like a lady's ear-ring. His friend present, John Power, begged to be allowed to strangle the dog, or cut its throat to relieve him from its fierce fangs.

“ ‘No,’ said Harry, although twisting with

pain, 'she shall not be injured—it was my fault to excite her,' so sitting down on a chair to relieve himself of her weight, he placed his hand firmly on her lower jaw, and looking her in the face, ordered her to let go—her hold gradually relaxed, and she lay at his feet—her eyes still fixed on him as if imploring forgiveness. I advised him to give her away.

“‘No, John,’ he said, ‘once my favourite, she shall never own another master.’

“That’s Harry Howard—but he has never played with her since. And mind, he can remember a snap from a lady as well as a dog. Do you understand my story, Miss Maitland?”

I think I do,” she replied; “but not the latter part of it.”

“It is all true to the letter,” added John Power; “and for the latter part, I refer you to a scene enacted at Elm Grove, some month or five weeks since, in which two Miss Archers, Bob, and another young lady (who shall be nameless), played a conspicuous part in hunting

and tormenting poor Harry, when his heart was low enough already."

Miss Maitland blushed deeply as John Power finished with these words, she felt the allusion, and although pained by the reproof intended to be conveyed by Power, she was relieved, however, by his determined refutation of Harry's marriage.

The quadrille being now finished, Mr. Thorold approached, requesting the honour of her hand during the next set.

This gentleman was an old college acquaintance of Harry's, professing great regard for him, but an admirer of Miss Maitland, into whose favour he tried every means to ingratiate himself, even at his friend's cost, although well knowing his partiality for her.

In love, as in war, some men think every ruse fair to attain their object; and Mr. Thorold, seeking every opportunity to widen the breach between Harry and his partner, thought to compass his own views by confirming the report of his marriage with his cousin.

“If I can only persuade her to believe this,” he reasoned, “in a fit of pique she will certainly accept me.”

Mr. Thorold judged rightly of woman’s feelings in general, and therefore, introducing the subject at once, he spoke in the highest praise of Harry’s cousin.

“She is, I assure you, Miss Maitland, a very lady-like, well informed, and most agreeable young person, and a good horsewoman also, which is a great attraction in Harry’s eyes ;—in short, they are so much together, and he is so attentive to her, that it cannot fail to be a match.”

Mr. Thorold watched the rising colour and expression of Miss Maitland’s face with intense satisfaction ; the poison he thought was working just as he anticipated, and his efforts to render himself agreeable were redoubled.

Independent of good looks, Thorold’s father was a man of great wealth, and well known to Mr. Selwyn, and the partiality of the latter for money being no secret, thought he had every prospect of success.

Power's words, however, still occurred to Miss Maitland, and she thought he at least would not deceive her ; although from these two conflicting statements her mind was perpetually kept in a painful state of suspense.

Later in the evening, Thorold again solicited the honour of her hand for a second quadrille ; which, although granted in the hope of obtaining further information, was considered by her admirer as a sure proof of her increasing regard for himself.

John Power, observing his attentions, whispered in a low voice as he passed her,—

“ There is poaching going on to-night ; what ! two quadrilles of an evening, Miss Maitland ? ”

She now regretted having accepted Mr. Thorold a second time, and for the remainder of the dance treated her partner with more reserve.

CHAPTER II.

HERE let me pause a moment, and offer a niece of sterling advice to any fair reader of these pages, whose first affections may have been misplaced or ill-requited: "Never marry any man in a fit of pique."

However your feelings may have been outraged, never act hastily in this most important matter, on which all your future happiness depends. However handsome, however rich, however fascinating another man may be, wait till the first wound is healed.

Whatever the world may say — whatever parents, relations, or friends may urge—"Never

marry in a fit of pique." Although pride and wounded feelings may prompt you to act hastily, pause and reflect. However repulsive to the mind the idea may prove, however degrading to the feelings, however ridiculed by the world, the fact remains, that woman by marriage becomes more or less the slave of man. The fetters may be heavy or light, of iron or gold, or of the finest silken thread, they are fetters still, and cannot be severed but by the hand of death. They will fret and gall, much or little, according to the temper of the wearer, but must be borne.

The sentence pronounced against Eve remains still unrepealed on all her descendants, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Man may roam far and wide, deriving pleasure (such as it is) from other sources, his disregard of the marriage vow is regarded lightly by the world, even applauded; but there is no excuse made for woman. Her wandering from the path of virtue or duty leads to a gulf from

which there is no return. If from mutual and long-tried love, happiness does not always follow, then what must that woman expect who marries in a fit of pique?

To resume the thread of my narrative, after dancing nearly the whole night, Miss Maitland returned home with her friend, Lucy Dundonald, and related the different conversations with John Power and Mr. Thorold.

“What do you think, Lucy, and which believe?” she asked.

“The former, certainly, in preference to the latter—one is disinterested, the other is not; for I observe Mr. Thorold pays you so much attention, that it is evident he will strive to prejudice you against Mr. Howard. I don’t like that man, Mary, and wish you had not danced two quadrilles with him.”

“So do I, Lucy, now; but I thought to hear more from him about a certain person.”

‘He will tell only what it suits him to say, my dear Mary, so don’t listen to his representations; but I can tell you, that Robert confirms Mr.

Power, that it is all nonsense about Harry being in love with his cousin. I also had a little conversation with John Power on the subject, and our ideas agree, that Harry did love you deeply, and does, he thinks, still; but after what has passed, it will take some time to re-establish you in his good opinion. Moreover, he believes you really prefer some one else to him."

"Indeed, Lucy! so I am to be at the beck and call of Mr. Henry Howard, and hold myself disengaged until such time as he may take it into his royal consideration to propose; or perhaps he may not, after all, think me worthy of his high regard. No, Lucy, the very idea is humiliating to every proper feeling. I cannot, will not, submit to such degradation; and for the future, he shall hear and see, that much as I did love him once, I can trample that love under foot."

"Well, my dear, you must do as you please; only don't be foolish enough to accept another man in pique, which would be killing yourself to spite your neighbour."

"I can scarcely tell what I may be induced to do," replied Mary,

"Well, then, will you grant your old and true friend one favour?"

"Yes, Lucy, that I cannot refuse you, if reasonable."

"Do not accept any offer for one month from this day — surely you will not deny me this request."

"No, Lucy; I readily grant it, and will do as you desire."

"Give me a kiss, then, dear Mary, as a pledge you will keep your word; and now, good night."

To dissipate thought, Miss Maitland now became a rather constant attendant at the fashionable balls and parties, and although the bloom had partially disappeared from her cheek, she was to the eyes of her admirers more lovely and interesting than ever, and her hand was as eagerly sought as before.

At this crisis, Captain Dundas, who had just returned to the gay city, discovered how matters stood between Harry and Miss Maitland, and

thought it a most favourable opportunity for the renewal of his suit; and it must be confessed he could not have arrived on the scene of action at a period more propitious to his views. Unfortunately, also, for Harry's cause, Captain Dundas, being a great favourite with Lucy's brother, as well as with herself, had well-grounded hopes of their willing co-operation. Rendered more cautious by his late defeat, the Captain assumed at first an air of more deferential respect, although well aware that, in such cases, delays might be dangerous.

To outraged feelings or offended dignity, soft words and delicate attentions are like fomentations to a smarting wound.

It was evident from Miss Maitland's reception of her rejected lover, that the Captain had not forfeited her good opinion; moreover, of all her admirers (with the exception of Harry Howard) he had obtained the greatest interest in her regard. Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, entirely ignorant of his former proposal to their daughter, welcomed Captain Dundas with their usual cor-

diality ; and Major Dundonald's house, being at all times open to him, every facility was thus afforded of meeting Miss Maitland in private *coteries*, as well as in public assemblies.

A fortnight had thus passed (the Captain improving the advantages held out to him), when Miss Dundonald, after a small party at their house, to which both had been invited, remarked to her friend,—

“Well, Mary, as I perceive Captain Dundas has renewed his addresses, and you may probably feel disposed to reward him for his constancy, I may at once release you from your promise, for I see little prospect of Mr. Howard's recovering his lost ground, or reinstating himself in your favour ; of which, impartial candour compels me to say, he is, from his long absence and neglect, quite undeserving.”

“So then, Lucy, you have really abandoned all defence of your champion at last ?”

“Not exactly, my dear friend ; although my saying so must prove me as almost hoping against hope ; and yet——”

“Well, Lucy—what yet?”

“I cannot now believe, that I have been so thoroughly deceived in his character. No — no,” said Lucy, musingly ; “ ’tis impossible—all his acts, looks, and words forbid deception ; and then his anxiety and manly courage in your defence against those villains. Oh, no, no, Mary, it must not—cannot be that Harry Howard is a hypocrite.”

“No, Lucy, of that no one can accuse him ; but is it not now too evident that he prefers his cousin to me, and will marry her or some one else, although still, perhaps, regarding me as his friend ?”

“No, Mary ; Mr. Power declares most positively, and he knows him well, that this will never happen ; and only last night, he offered again to bet me a hundred pounds that Harry Howard loves you only, and never would marry another.”

“Well, Lucy, then I can only say he has adopted the strangest mode of showing his affection ; but I don’t believe all Mr. Power

says in defence of his friend. Neglect like his proves my suspicions to be correct, and I think we may as well dismiss the subject now for one more agreeable; only remember, Lucy, that my promise to you shall still continue in force, and it shall be faithfully kept to the time and letter."

At this moment the door of the drawing-room in which they were sitting was thrown open by the servant, and Captain Dundas announced, who, approaching in the most courtly though friendly manner, shook hands with both ladies. The Captain, being in high feather this morning, took a chair near Miss Maitland, whom he more particularly addressed.

"Have you heard the extraordinary news of the double elopement from Mrs. Curtis's party last night?"

"No," replied both ladies; "but who," inquired Miss Dundonald, "were the fair, and, I must add, foolish runaways?"

"The two Misses Corbyn," replied the Captain; "those flighty girls who were always doing curious things."

“And who, may I ask, were the simpletons who carried off two such precious prizes?”

“Oh, Captain Reynolds and Mr. Harley.”

“Just the persons I should suspect,” replied Miss Dundonald, “of doing such a foolish thing; and they are, I think, well matched.”

“I fear you are very severe on runaway matches, Miss Dundonald.”

“Not more so than necessary.”

“But,” rejoined the Captain, “what are two young persons, passionately in love with each other, with an old miserly papa, and a worldly-minded mamma, refusing their consent, to do?”

“Do!” replied Miss Dundonald, “wait till their mad fit is over, to be sure.”

“Oh, really you are too severe on youthful lovers, who exist only in each other’s smiles; and are you, Miss Maitland, equally cruel to Cupid’s slaves?”

“I fear so,” she replied; “few cases of elopement admit of any excuse, and misery and repentance usually follow such an imprudent step.”

“ I submit your opinion is correct, fair ladies,” said the Captain, with a low bow ; “ and may I now inquire if you purpose taking a stroll in the Crescent this inviting morning ? ”

“ What say you, Mary ? ” asked Lucy ; “ a walk, I think, will do us both good.”

Her assent being given, the Captain begged permission to escort them ; an acquaintance joined the party, and Lucy resigned Miss Maitland to the Captain’s attentions during their promenade through this (at that time) most fashionable part of the gay city, where the Captain’s behaviour was generally noticed and commented upon.

“ Ah, my dear ! ” exclaimed the rich widow, (who occupied the house adjoining Mr. Selwyn’s), extending her hand ; “ delighted to see you, my dear, looking so bright and blooming this morning ; but that is easily accounted for, when I see by whom you are escorted,” with a significant look towards Captain Dundas, which the Captain returned by a complacent and self-satisfied smile.

Mary Maitland, disliking this plain and public allusion, passed quickly on, assuming a more distant manner to her assiduous companion, and soon prevailed on her friend to return home. Although pleased with his conversation and polite attentions, the thought of marrying Captain Dundas had never entered as yet into her calculations, and Mrs. Astey's broad insinuation offended her, although the report had now gained ground that an engagement between herself and the Captain was unquestionably on the tapis, if not actually formed.

A few days after, the Captain being invited to a dinner-party at Mr. Selwyn's, and sitting next to Miss Maitland, his eye was attracted by a ring on her finger.

"What a pretty ring that is of yours," he observed; "will you allow me to look at it?"

"Certainly," she replied, taking it off, and giving it to him.

After examining it he returned it, saying—

"It is extremely elegant, and I think I have seen it before."

"Very probably," returned Miss Maitland ;
"it was a present to me from Louisa Archer."

"Indeed !" said the Captain ; "it appears to have been made for *your* finger, and has found its way to the right place," with a look so peculiar, that Miss Maitland could not fail to notice it. Thinking there must be some mystery connected with this ring, which she was resolved to fathom ; on the following morning, she called on Miss Archer, who was staying with the gay widow, and questioned her about her present, which she said had been particularly noticed by Captain Dundas the previous evening. After some hesitation Miss Archer confessed that the ring had been given to her by the Captain two years previously, when she was engaged to be married to him ; and that now, hearing and believing that his affections had been transferred to her, she had also transferred the ring, where, by all accounts, it ought to be, on her engaged finger.

"Your conduct," said Mary, rising indignantly, "is both ungenerous and indelicate, and

Captain Dundas may have been induced to think, by seeing this ring worn by me, that I was aware of its history, and had accepted it, as a pledge of my altered sentiments towards himself."

"Oh, Mary dear," replied Louisa, "do not pray, be so angry with me for this little *ruse*, which I really thought could not be otherwise than agreeable to you both. Indeed, I acted with the best intentions."

"Very likely, Louisa; but there is your present, and I hope you will never again take such a liberty with me. Captain Dundas is well aware of my real sentiments towards him, which have not, and will not, change;" and with these words she left the room.

The officious interference of imprudent friends is generally productive of more mischief than good; and Mary Maitland, after the discovery of Miss Archer's little innocent trick, began to examine the true state of her feelings and her heart more closely, and upon a rigid search, the response returned was, a decided repugnance to

marry Captain Dundas. Moreover, the very idea of this attempt to fasten an engagement upon her, caused the blood to mantle in her cheek with indignant excitement.

CHAPTER III.

THE same night there was a grand gathering at the Assembly Rooms, for which Mary and her friend Lucy had received cards of admission from Captain Dundas ; but Mary felt so offended, that she at once resolved to return her ticket, and went to see her friend for this purpose.

The history of the ring was soon told, and Mary, at its close, laid the ticket on the table, saying—

“ Will you enclose this, Lucy, to Captain Dundas, with my compliments, and say I have altered my mind, and shall not go ? ”

“ But, Mary, do consider a little first ; this

would be very rude, as at once identifying Captain Dundas with Louisa's conduct, and most probably, poor man! he knows nothing whatever about it, except that the ring was a present from her to you."

"I fear, Lucy, from his looks last night, that he and Louisa have acted in concert together."

"These are mere suspicions, my dear, so let us take no notice now, and at the ball I will try to find out more about it; but I think Mr. Howard will also be there to-night, and that is another inducement for us to go."

"Not for me, Lucy," retorted Mary, with an offended air; "I do not intend that either he or Captain Dundas shall be palmed upon me by the interference of my friends."

"If directed at me, that is a very unkind and unfair speech, Mary," replied Lucy. "Your true happiness has ever been uppermost in my thoughts, without reference or regard to Mr. Howard or any one else."

"Oh, Lucy, forgive my ill temper this morning. I have been very much annoyed, but

your friendship I have never for an instant doubted."

"Then, my dear Mary, I suppose we shall go together to-night?"

"Yes, Lucy, as you think I ought not to return the ticket."

On entering the ball-room Captain Dundas was, as usual, in waiting to engage Miss Maitland for the first dance, which, to his surprise, she politely declined, saying, she had promised her cousin, who was staying with her, the first quadrille.

"May I hope, then, for the second?" inquired the Captain, very deferentially. A formal bow was the only affirmative, with which she passed on, leaning on her cousin's arm.

On standing up in the first set, John Power was their *vis-à-vis*, and obtained her promise to dance with him as soon as disengaged.

"And pray, may I ask when that will be?" he inquired.

"The third set from this," she replied, rather coolly.

“I shall not forget,” said John; “for, surrounded as you are by so many handsome and gay flatterers, I fully appreciate your kindness in accepting the arm of plain John Power.”

A short time after, Power was standing on the platform with his attention wholly absorbed in the movements of Miss Maitland and Captain Dundas, who were dancing before him, when he was accosted by Major Dundonald with—

“Ah, Power! it is no use now scanning the pair before us—the thing is settled, and your friend’s chance completely cut off.”

“Indeed!” said Power; “how know you this?”

“Only that Dundas told me this morning, Mary Maitland had accepted a diamond ring from him, and wore it on the engaged finger. After this, there cannot be much doubt about her intentions, I think.”

“Certainly not, Major, if the story be true; but to judge from the lady’s looks and manner now, I should draw a different conclusion.”

“Oh, that’s very natural; women always

look serious enough at first, after accepting a man."

"Well, Dundonald, perhaps you are right, there; but I must know more about this ring affair before I am satisfied; and now I think my opportunity has arrived;" saying which, he descended from his position, and waited close to Miss Maitland until her dance was finished, when his arm was accepted. Power remained silent for a few minutes, then in a low tone said—

"After what I have heard to-night, Miss Maitland, I conclude I am not premature in offering you my congratulations on your bright prospects of happiness."

"In what, Mr. Power?" she exclaimed; "what prospects of happiness do you mean?"

"Arising from your engagement to Captain Dundas, which, I am told, is finally settled."

"By whom, Mr. Power?—Who is your informant?"

John Power then related his conversation with the Major.

“This is all untrue,” she replied, with ill-suppressed indignation ; “but the real truth is this ;” and she told him about the present from Miss Archer, which she had that morning returned. “And now, Mr. Power, you have my full authority to contradict, in the most unqualified sense, the report that any engagement exists, or is ever likely to exist, between myself and Captain Dundas, whose conduct in this matter is unjustifiable.”

“I am delighted to hear it,” replied Power ; “for, in my opinion, you would never know happiness with him.”

“You are prejudiced, I know, against him,” she added, “and I believe I can guess the cause.”

“Indeed !” said Power ; “pray tell me.”

“That I cannot do just now.”

“Then I will tell you, Miss Maitland : you think I would favour my friend Howard—you judge rightly—I would, and will do so whenever I have the opportunity, for he is, notwithstanding appearances, honest and true-hearted, and

his ideas of women and marriage are precisely my own. But now mark my words, Miss Maitland, and in truth and sincerity I utter them : were Harry Howard a perfect stranger to us both, I would still do all in my power to prevent your marrying such a man as Captain Dundas. *I* know him thoroughly,—you do not, and never can ; but however much you may despise the advice and warning of John Power, he is one of your truest friends, could you believe it.”

“ Indeed I do believe you,” she replied ; “ but for the future I must be guided by my own judgment, and not admit of intervention by others, in a case which so entirely depends on my own feelings.”

“ You are quite right,” said Power, good-humouredly ; “ and I suppose, therefore, I must not mention to-night a name familiar to us both.”

“ Not if you intend by so doing to advocate his cause.”

“ Agreed, Miss Maitland. Then he is the

greatest fool, craving your pardon ; the most green-eyed monster, the most uncompromising, haughty fellow that ever walked the earth. There he stands, looking with as much contempt on all this gay assemblage, as if they were cabbage stumps."

"When married to his cousin, then, it is to be hoped she will change him, and he will become more humanized."

"Were such a thing possible," replied Power, "Harry would be in a mad-house within a week."

"Then what is the matter with him?—He did not seem even to notice me when passing to-night, and his looks are enough to freeze one."

"Aye, aye, Miss Maitland, there's the rub ; these Bath fellows have been baiting him about your engagement to the Captain, and if I don't look after him, he will be knocking some of them down, and be engaged in something more serious than marriage."

"Oh, Mr. Power, pray prevent that ; let me

entreat of you, do not allow him to quarrel on my account—will you promise me?”

“Yes—on one condition—although it is not the first time Harry’s head has come in contact with a bullet on your account.”

“Oh, no—indeed, Mr. Power, I never can forget all he has done and braved for me,” she said, with a deep sigh.

“Were you to trust to acts and deeds, instead of listening to fine got-up speeches,” said Power, “you would never err in discerning a man’s true character. But now, our dance being finished, I must leave you, and pour some balm into my friend’s lacerated and smarting wounds, or he will have left the room.”

On joining his friend, Power’s first exclamation was — “Harry, it’s all right still!” and raising his voice louder, said, “the report that Miss Maitland is engaged to be married to Captain Dundas is a perfect falsehood.”

“Indeed!” remarked a friend of the Captain’s, who overheard these words; “are you prepared to prove what you assert, Mr. Power?”

"Precisely, sir," retorted Power; "my authority cannot be disputed."

"Then may I beg to know from whom it is derived?"

"Whoever has a right to ask that question," said Power, "shall receive an answer—you have none; but I repeat what I have before said—Miss Maitland is not engaged to Captain Dundas, and, what's more, never has been, and, I believe, never will be.—So now, Harry, come along." Saying which, they pressed on through the crowd, and encountering Major Dundonald, Power said, exultingly—"Your story is all a hoax, Major; there is not a word of truth in it from first to last."

"How can that be, Power? I heard it from Dundas himself."

"No matter, it's all gammon, and just tell the Captain that I say so."

Ignorant of what had passed between Power and herself, Captain Dundas waited until he saw Miss Maitland disengaged, and sitting with Miss Dundonald, when he again pressed for

another dance, which was firmly refused, and at the same moment, Harry Howard, yielding to Power's persuasions, approached and was accepted.

A few moments after, Major Dundonald and the Captain were seen in earnest conversation together, the latter looking extremely crest-fallen, and biting his lips with vexation.

"You have made a fool of yourself, Dundas," said the former, "and frightened the bird from the snare before she was well noosed; and but for this silly affair of the ring, you would have stood a capital chance, and might have gradually led her on till fairly captured."

"It's a foolish affair, indeed," replied Captain Dundas; "but I will explain all to-morrow, and convince her I know nothing of Louisa's intentions."

"It won't do *now*," said Dundonald; "as you may see, Howard is again in favour."

"Confound him! and John Power, too," said the Captain. "I'll try hard to beat them both."

“Hopeless, my dear fellow,” said the Major as he turned away.

Harry had been too much piqued and annoyed by the rumours in free circulation for some time past, about Miss Maitland’s engagement to the Captain, to admit of his being in a very agreeable humour that night, and an unusual restraint was visible in his manner towards her, which did not entirely wear off, although they parted good friends.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the day following, Captain Dundas had an opportunity, (when, calling at Mr. Selwyn's, he found Miss Maitland alone,) of explaining his non-participation in the ring affair, and hoped she would acquit him of any intentional disrespect to herself, and not allow such a trifling matter to interrupt the harmony of their friendly intercourse.

"As a friend and acquaintance, I shall be glad to meet you as before," she replied; "but last year I was obliged so fully to explain my sentiments to you, that I must beg you will spare me the pain of repeating them."

“I had hoped,” said the Captain, “that my undeviating attachment, which absence from your presence has served only to increase, would or might be at no very distant period favourably returned.”

“I am sorry to hear this, after what has passed,” replied Mary; “and for the future, we must remain strangers to each other.”

“Oh! hear me, Miss Maitland, pray hear me!” he was again commencing, when she arose, and abruptly left the room; and a few days after, the gay Captain bid adieu to the City of Waters.

Women are generally accused of caprice in their conduct towards men, and with raising expectations in their admirers, which are never intended to be realized; but this is often a most unfair inference. They are unquestionably pleased with the attentions of agreeable men; and it would be strange if the pleasure they felt could be wholly suppressed;—there is not the slightest reason why it should be; but the

fault lies with men equally, if not more than with the softer sex, who choose to think that every girl who, by looks or words, expresses herself pleased with their attentions, must of necessity fall in love with them. A *Ladies' man* is generally the last man any girl of sense would accept as a husband. Women prefer those as partners for life, who in character and appearance form the greatest contrast to themselves; and the more difficult the conquest, the greater the exertions made by them to achieve it.

In defiance of reports, and even against her better judgment, hope still lingered in Mary Maitland's heart, that Harry Howard was not entirely lost to her; and she had met with no one yet, who, when compared with him, seemed calculated to realize her expectations of what a husband ought to be. Moreover, she was not one of those girls whose thoughts run solely on marriage. She was happy in her home, and never dreamt of changing her state in favour of any man, who did not possess her whole and undivided affections. Fond of society and en-

joying the recreation of occasional balls and parties, she did not permit despondency to obtain the entire mastery over her feelings; and it must be confessed, that a spice of pique rendered the attentions she received from other men more palatable than they otherwise might have been.

On the retirement of the Captain, whose close siege had excluded others, the ground lay open to their advances, as Harry Howard still kept aloof, unhappy and doubtful how to act, and chiefly confining himself to his country avocations.

“The month has now passed,” said Lucy one morning, entering her friend’s room; “and I release you from your engagement. My object has been obtained, and you are now free to act as you think proper.”

“And what was your object, Lucy?” inquired her friend.

“Simply to prevent your hastily committing yourself, under your then excited and offended feelings; but, I must confess, once I thought

you almost regretted it had been given, and that Captain Dundas would render its imposition rather grievous to be borne."

"There you were deceived, Lucy; for he is not the person I could ever accept as a husband, although in all respects but one, I liked him very much, and that one was a want of manliness of character. But liking and loving are two distinct feelings, and I must freely confess I cannot yet think of love again, and probably never shall."

"Well, but dear Mary, what do you think of Mr. Spalding? He is manly, handsome, and agreeable, without being foppish in his manners, and his sister told me in confidence, is seriously taken with you."

"Our acquaintance is too recent to form a correct opinion; but, as far as I have seen, he appears to answer your description."

"May he then live in hopes, should another person not return to his allegiance within a given time?" inquired Lucy, archly; "for surely, you are so encompassed by beaux, that you had

much better select one, and put a stop to the hopes of others."

"And then, perhaps, marry him, to get rid of his importunities. I don't like joking in such cases, Lucy," returned her friend, gravely.

"Well, my dear, then joking apart, what report can I make to his sister?"

"Nothing, Lucy. I will receive no man's attentions with such an understanding, and you may say I am not inclined to marry at all."

"Well, Mary, after such a sage resolve, you will allow me, I hope, to introduce Miss Spalding to you; she is a most lady-like, charming person, and you will certainly like her, if you don't like her brother."

"I would rather decline the introduction just now, Lucy."

"Well, my dear, some other time then will do as well."

Mr. Spalding was about thirty; tall and good-looking, of quiet and rather reserved manners; sensible in his conversation, and most respectful

in his deportment towards ladies ; having also an ample fortune, and living in good style with his mother and sister, his acquaintance was eagerly sought by all the mammas who had daughters to dispose of.

Lady Dundonald was easily persuaded by her daughter to send cards of invitation to the whole family for a party in the next week, to which Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, with Miss Maitland, were also asked ; Lucy thinking Mr. Spalding a most desirable match for her friend, and taking this opportunity of making the heads of the two families acquainted, which she hoped might lead to a happy result ; dreading lest her friend, by being left a prey to her own bitter reflections, might sink into a hopeless despondency, as she could no longer now see any prospect of her union with Harry Howard. The hectic flush on Mary's cheek, with frequent cough, had already caused much alarm to Mrs. Selwyn, and the medical man who attended her expressed an opinion, that being of a consumptive tendency, change of scene and air would be ab-

olutely necessary to prevent serious consequences.

Lucy, zealously interested in her friend's welfare, and thinking Mr. Spalding just the person, from his kind and warm-hearted feelings, and evident admiration of Mary Maitland, to render her perfectly happy, considered it of great importance if she could bring about a marriage, as the only means of rescuing her friend from, perhaps, an untimely grave ; but, knowing by experience her susceptibility, she resolved for the present, not to obtrude either advice or remarks upon so delicate a subject.

Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn were much pleased with both Mr. Spalding, his mother and sister, and so far all seemed in a fair train for the accomplishment of Lucy's wishes. The morning after the party, at breakfast, Mr. Selwyn remarked—

“The Mr. Spalding we met last night is one of the most agreeable and sensible men I have known for a long time, Mary—when did you become acquainted?”

"A few weeks ago, papa."

"Well, my dear, he seems a very superior person ; quite different to the generality of young men we meet with in Bath, and I thought very attentive to you—Eh ! Mary ?" with a significant smile.

"Not particularly so," she replied, with a slight blush.

"Well, my dear, your mother and I intend leaving our cards on them to-day or to-morrow, and I hope to see more of them. I am told they have a fine place in Devonshire, and are of good family and fortune."

"Who is your informant, my dear ?" inquired Mrs. Selwyn.

"Major Dundonald, whose friend Captain Standish knows all about them. They are here only for a few months, on account of the daughter's health, and then return to the country, where the son, to whom the property belongs, occupies himself in agricultural and literary pursuits."

From this time an intimacy sprung up be-

tween the families, and Mr. Spalding became a frequent visitor at Mr. Selwyn's house, where his agreeable manners and conversation soon obtained for him the most friendly reception.

His unobtrusive and gentle manners to Miss Maitland, coupled with his anxiety about her health, shown both by looks and little acts of attention, began to exercise an influence over her feelings, soothing her excitement and gradually inducing a more cheerful frame of mind. Believing he might now hope for a favourable issue, Mr. Spalding called one morning on Mr. Selwyn, explaining his circumstances, and requesting permission to pay his addresses to his daughter.

This was readily accorded.—“But,” said Mr. Spalding, “though I feel bound in honour, first to obtain your sanction to my suit, I shall be obliged by my proposals being kept as yet a secret from Miss Maitland.”

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Selwyn, “if you desire it; but may I enquire the motives for

this secrecy, which is rather unusual in such cases ?”

“ My motives, Mr. Selwyn, are guided by what has been hinted to me in confidence by a friend of Miss Maitland’s, that she fears her affections have been bestowed on another, who paid her much attention for a time, although it seems now at an end, and too great precipitancy on my part might, and probably would, destroy my hopes of winning her affections.”

“ Your wishes shall be complied with,” said Mr. Selwyn, “ although I am not aware of my daughter having formed any serious attachment to any one, and I think you must have been misinformed on this subject. But you will, of course, permit me to make known to Mrs. Selwyn the purport of our conversation.”

“ Certainly,” replied Mr. Spalding—and thus ended the interview.

Mary, deeply incensed at Harry Howard’s continued absence and indifference, and believing this was done to convince her that his intentions had never been of a serious nature, pride and

resentment at such conduct came to her aid, and she resolved to prove to him and the world, whatever it might cost her, that he no longer exercised any control over her feelings. Mr. Spalding's undisguised preference was no longer repulsed, and the increasing cheerfulness of her looks, when in his society, told him plainly of the change which was taking place he hoped in his favour.

They were one night at a small party at Lady Dundonald's, when Mr. Spalding remarked,—

“It affords me the greatest pleasure to observe the decided improvement in your health and spirits, and I trust for the future doctors will be discarded for ever. They are very necessary though unpleasant friends,” he said, with a smile, “and I dare say you will be glad to get rid of their attendance.”

“Yes, I shall, indeed,” she replied; “they are, however, although rather disagreeable, friends in need still.”

“I hope for the future more agreeable friends

will supply their place, and that you will permit me to aspire to be one of that number."

A slight blush overspread her features, as she said,—

"I feel obliged by your compliment, Mr. Spalding; but friends, generally so termed, are like summer leaves, which fall before the rough winds of autumn."

"That is, you mean they seldom stand the test of time, or change in circumstances."

"Exactly so."

"Those are pretenders only to the name and title," he added, "and I hope you will not include me in such an unworthy class."

"Oh, you know," said she, smiling, "present company is always excepted."

"Then," said he, eagerly, "you will allow me to try and gain that proud position in your esteem, and endeavour to prove to you, that I do not belong to the deciduous order of trees, whose leaves cannot withstand the first nip of winter."

"Oh, if you think the trial worth making,"

she replied, laughing; "but I give you fair notice, I am very particular in my requirements, and difficult to please;" on which, she rose to join her friend Lucy, who was sitting by Miss Spalding, and was no unobservant spectator of Mary's varying colour whilst conversing with her brother; and she had just hazarded a remark to her companion, that she hoped he would not be too precipitate in his proposals, when Mary's light, cheerful look satisfied both, that all as yet went well.

From this night less restraint was visible in Miss Maitland's manner towards her admirer, who, assuming the privilege of a friend, ventured to advise and caution her in many things; and it seemed evident from the pleasure with which his attentions were received in preference to others, even Robert Howard, that he was in a fair way of distancing all other competitors.

Robert's vanity, however, made him think no other but himself had ever made any lasting impression on her heart.

“Well, Robert,” observed a friend of his, who had been watching her behaviour one evening, “that fellow, Spalding, takes the lead now, and will win in a canter.”

“Not he, Frank ; she’s mine, if I choose to say the word.”

“Then you had better say it pretty quickly, my boy, for he is playing his game hard and fast, and won’t wait much longer, I can see, by his looks and manner.”

“Ah, Frank, very likely, but I will soon put a spoke in his wheel ; although, to tell you the truth, I have two or three affairs of this kind on hand already, and don’t know which to choose. I like that girl the best of all, and she will suit me, but I cannot quite make out about the money ; still she sha’n’t marry that sentimental Spalding, so I will just go and clip his wings for him.”

With this amiable resolve, Robert attached himself to Miss Maitland for a great portion of the evening, and by his lively sallies and pleasant

humour, with those polite attentions so peculiarly his own, he failed not to win her approving smiles, to the great annoyance of her more grave admirer.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN POWER, seeing how matters stood, and that no time was to be lost at this critical juncture, resolved to probe Harry to the quick, and rouse him from his lethargy.

Early the next morning, he was off on his benevolent mission to Beechwood, and found his friend alone in the library, reading one of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

As Power entered the room, the book was laid aside, and Harry rose quickly to greet him.

"Ah, Harry," said John, shaking him by the hand, "this is sad work, moping in this old den, and cramming your head with that con-

founded trash ; spending hours and days in listless indolence, whilst others are reaping where you have sown."

"What do you mean, Power?"

"Generally my meaning is pretty plain ; but come, get your hat, and take a turn up the avenue. The atmosphere of this room does not suit me this morning ; besides, 'walls have ears,' and what I have to say, is intended for your ear only."

The two friends were soon walking arm-in-arm together from the house, when Harry said,—

"Now, John, for your secret."

"It's not a very pleasant one ; but I fear a certain young lady will be very soon, perhaps this evening, if not already, engaged to one of your rivals."

"His name, John?"

"Spalding ; you have, perhaps, heard of him before."

"Yes," said Harry ; "some officious friends have told me of his attentions."

"He's not to be sneezed at, Harry. Hand-

some, agreeable, good connections, and fine fortune ; in short, he is of all I have seen, Bob included, the most dangerous rival you have ever yet had to contend with."

" Well, John Power, then if that is the case, let her marry him if she likes," said Harry, with a deep-drawn sigh ; " if she prefers him or any other man to me, she is free to choose and please herself."

" But my dear fellow—" said Power.

" Stay, John, one moment, and listen to my resolve. You say she is engaged, or you believe will be this night ; then there is a barrier placed between us, which even had I the power should never be crossed by me. You know the song,—

' By the side of yon Sumach, whose red berry dips
In the gush of the fountain, how sweet to recline,
And to know that I sighed upon innocent lips,
Which ne'er had been sighed on by any but
mine.'

The last line echoes my sentiments ; never, never will I take to my heart any woman whose lips have been pressed by another man, or

held in his embrace. The very thought is maddening—contamination—say no more, Power—never mention her name again.”

“ But stop, Harry ; and now hearken to me, one moment, in return. This girl has never loved, and never can love any man but you ; this I’ll swear, for I have watched her continually—narrowly ; but by your neglect and indifference, after all your former devoted attention, she feels degraded in the eyes of the world, and the estimation of her friends, as loving you without any return, and this feeling alone can, and may induce her, to accept another’s addresses, although her heart may break in the struggle between love and pride. Now, Harry, for your own peace of mind, (for I won’t acquit you, recollect, of excessive folly and caprice), the fate of that dear girl depends upon your seeing her this night, and rescuing her from impending misery, perhaps for life. Be yourself, Harry, once more, and away with these morbid and absurd ideas. Are you so immaculate and pure, that the fact of a girl having received the ad-

dresses of another, and perhaps received a kiss, snatched from her hastily, and without being aware of her admirer's intention, and possibly without her consent; is such an act as this, I ask, to render any woman contemptible in your sight, who in heart and feelings is as pure-minded as yourself?"

"Women have a right to follow the bent of their own inclinations," said Harry. "I judge them not harshly, as you suppose, but this is my determination; since, with all the passions and licence accorded to men generally, my lips have never pressed any of womankind, so shall the lips of her I marry, never have been pressed by man."

"Oh, *tremendus justus Midas!*" exclaimed Power, in astonishment—"here's a confession! Why, Harry, can all this be true? My stars! you are indeed a paragon of perfection. Hang it all, you ought to be carried about in a cage, as the eighth wonder of the world."

"No more, Power, of this ribaldry—I am not now in the humour for jesting."

“Then, in sober seriousness, Harry, what is your receipt for such self-denial, which ought to be known for the benefit of the sinful race of men?”

“Religion, Power ; my passions are as strong, my inclinations as sinful as other men’s—religion alone has controlled them, and notwithstanding all your ridicule and jeers, will control them still. The proudest victory a man can obtain, is over himself.”

“Harry,” said Power, “forgive me ; I was only joking to try and rouse you from your apathy. You are a noble-minded fellow, and there is one woman only I know deserving of you—more pure-minded than yourself, and who, I am sure, loves you also, as you deserve to be loved. But what say you to your darling marrying that old dotard of a Colonel, who has offered to settle his whole fortune upon her ? He can’t last long, and ten thousand a year, with a charming young widow ; would not that suit you, my boy ?”

“Bah !” said Harry, “no widows for me ;

the flower I wear must be of my own gathering, fresh and unpolluted by other hands."

"Then, by all that's mysterious, why don't you gather that rare sweet flower, which others would give all they possess to obtain?"

"Because I dare not hope it could ever belong to me."

"Pshaw, Harry! 'faint heart never won fair lady.' She is all your own, or Jack Power is the veriest idiot that ever walked the earth, so don't be a fool and monster, as you are, in rending that dear girl's heart to pieces."

"But is she engaged, Power, to that fellow Spalding? — On your honour, tell me truly."

"No, I believe not, certainly, as yet; but there is no saying what women will do in pique, when mortified and neglected by the man they love. We should do the same, perhaps, and put up with the first pretty girl that would have us. Now, Master Harry, will you be at the rooms to-night? or I'll never stir another inch to serve you."

“ Well, Power, to oblige you I will go, and see how matters stand.”

“ That’s right, Harry ; give me your fist upon it, and now away with the blues, and look and act once more like Harry Howard. I shall be there before you, and find out all, to save your scruples from even the chance of being compromised.”

Thus parted these two staunch friends.

We must now see what was passing elsewhere on that same morning. Mrs. Selwyn and her daughter were seated together, when the former, thinking concealment no longer necessary, made her acquainted with Mr. Spalding’s interview with her father, and their joint concurrence in his addresses.

“ I do not, my dear Mary,” said her mother, “ wish to lose you—in fact, our parting will be a bitter trial indeed ; and were I to consult my own happiness only, I never would consent to your leaving us at all ; but I think Mr. Spalding so estimable a person, and so truly eligible in every respect, that I should not hesi-

tate to entrust your happiness to his keeping."

"He appears all you represent him to be," said Mary, trembling and blushing deeply; "but although esteeming him highly, I cannot say that I entertain any deeper feelings at present towards him."

"Oh, my dear! the other is sure to follow, and the most lasting affection is founded on respect and regard for a man's intrinsic worth. So I hope, for your own sake, my dear child, when Mr. Spalding proposes, you will not refuse him."

"I hope he will not yet do so," said Mary, "as our acquaintance has been too short to know him sufficiently; and I cannot positively engage myself to any man before thoroughly satisfied in my own mind that I can love as well as esteem him; and you, my dear mother, must agree with me, that in such a serious case as marriage, deliberation and caution are most necessary."

"Well, my dear child, you must do as you

please; but you can accept his addresses conditionally, that for the present no actual engagement shall exist on either side until you know more of each other, which will leave you at liberty to enter or not into further obligations. Surely, my dear, there can be no possible objection to your receiving Mr. Spalding's attentions on those conditions?"

Mary was about to reply, when Lucy Donald was ushered into the room.

"I am come, Mary, to ask you to join me in a walk this morning, if so inclined, and you are not better engaged."

"With pleasure," exclaimed Mary, glad to escape; "I will put on my things directly;" and soon returning prepared for their promenade, the two friends set out together. Lucy remarked Mary's abstraction, and inquired the cause.

"Mamma has been talking to me on a very serious subject, Lucy, and I scarcely know how I ought to act."

"Well, love, if my advice is worth anything it is most truly at your service."

The conversation with her mother was then related.

“And now, Lucy, I hardly know what to do. As to loving Mr. Spalding as I ought, if intending to marry him, that *you* must know, is at present impossible. Is it honourable, then, to lead him on in his addresses, merely because I am pleased with his attentions, and esteem him as a friend? Surely this cannot be right, and I will never confess to another that my affections have been engaged without a return,” said poor Mary, with a quivering lip and tearful eye.

“For this, Mary, there can be no necessity,” replied Lucy; “if merely interested about him, you can state how you really feel, and that you entertain at present no other sentiment than esteem. This is fair and candid enough, and no reproaches can then follow; but I am sure you will soon begin to think differently, he is so truly amiable, kind, and good-tempered, and, in my opinion, superior to almost any man you have ever known. Friendship, my dear Mary, will soon ripen, as it has done before, into love,

and you will be the envy of all Bath. Even the Ladies Dunmore are quite furious at the preference he shews you, so I am told, and every girl is setting her cap at him. What a lucky person you will be to carry off the prize !”

“ Still, Lucy, do not mistake my meaning. I could not accept him now, and must have time to reflect well before I take a step on which all my future happiness depends.”

“ Well, dear, you can make your own terms ; but remember, men don’t like to live long in uncertainty, or on hopes only ; their feelings are warmer and stronger than ours, and will not brook delay or evasion.”

“ Very likely, Lucy ; but indelicate haste would deter me, even at the last moment, from marrying any man who should show so little consideration for my feelings.”

“ Well, dear Mary, on one point I am perfectly satisfied, that your mamma (who is so different to mothers generally, and would most truly grieve at your leaving her), would never urge you to accept Mr. Spalding, unless tho-

roughly convinced of his many good qualities, and that such a prospect of a happy union may not occur again. That is her impression, I know, and she sacrifices her own happiness for yours."

"Yes, dearest Lucy, that I firmly believe; but I am a prey to doubts and fears difficult to explain, and I must have time for due reflection, so say no more at present, dear Lucy, on this most momentous subject. We shall meet at the Rooms to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, I hope so."

CHAPTER VI.

POWER went early to the rooms that evening, waiting in the lobby till Miss Maitland arrived.

“Will you allow me the pleasure of dancing the first quadrille?” inquired Power, with a deferential bow.

“I am sorry to say I am engaged.”

“The next, then?” said Power.

The same answer.

“The third?”

Still a refusal.

“Miss Maitland!” said Power, drawing himself up proudly; “I have not deserved this treatment

from you, and am ill-disposed to sue further ;— but allow me one word aside ;” and he whispered, “ Accept no proposal that may be made you to-night, or you may be miserable for life.”

“ What can you mean, Mr. Power ?” she inquired.

“ My meaning shall be plain enough, if you will dance a quadrille or walk with me ten minutes in the card-room.”

“ Then I will dance with you the second quadrille. For the first I am positively engaged ; and the second partly so, but will make an excuse in your favour.”

“ Agreed !” said he, as Mr. Spalding came up ; “ and mind my warning till then ;” saying which, he turned away.

Power was just in time ; for Spalding, emboldened by his late reception, made her an indirect proposal, which she evaded, by not appearing to understand his meaning, and it was not repeated, a crowd of idlers pressing round them at the time ; and having secured her hand for

another dance, he resigned her reluctantly to John Power, who was in close attendance.

“Now, Miss Maitland,” said he, “one turn in the card-room, being more retired, as I have something to say, which concerns you deeply.”

“Well, Mr. Power,” said Mary, as they entered the said room, “what is this mighty secret?”

“This—Harry Howard loves you.”

“Oh, Mr. Power, is that all! it is only what you have before told me. I cannot listen to more. Pray do not, I beg, ever again mention this painful subject.”

“Then judge for yourself,” he replied. “This very day has Harry Howard confessed to me, that he loves you, and you only, and will never marry another;—this I wrung from him, although his heartstrings seemed bursting with the confession.”

“Then, Mr. Power, what has made him so long a stranger?”

“His belief in the report that you were engaged to another.”

“Can this be true?—do not deceive me, Mr. Power.”

“May John Power’s hand wither from his arm, if this is not as true as the sun in the Heavens;—but I have done more than this—he has promised to be here this evening, and give you every explanation;—will you receive him with your former kindness?”

“Yes, I will do so.”

“Mind, I don’t say he will now make you a formal proposal; but this I’ll swear, and pledge my word of honour to, he loves you, with a love that cannot be surpassed, and the proposal must soon follow. Are you satisfied?”

“Yes!” she exclaimed, trembling with agitation; “but how very nearly our prospects of happiness have been wrecked!”

“I know and see it all,” he added, “and happy am I, indeed, that I arrived in time.”

On being joined by Mr. Spalding, Mary’s looks beamed with so much pleasure, that mistaking the cause, he was induced to renew the subject nearest his heart, and said—

“May I be permitted to hope that the friendly intimacy with which I have felt myself so highly honoured by you, and, I must add, so exceedingly gratified, may be productive of a deeper regard?—believe me, Miss Maitland, no one can feel a greater interest in you than myself, and every energy of my heart and mind shall be directed to render you perfectly happy. The sincere regard, and respectful admiration I have long entertained for you, will, I trust, induce you to think favourably of my addresses, to which the sanction of your family has also been added.”

“I am really pained,” replied Miss Maitland, “to hear this confession of your sentiments, Mr. Spalding, to which I cannot respond, or consider you in any other light than a friend; but as such, believe me, I shall always be happy to regard you. It were uncandid in me, however, to say, that I have not experienced much pleasure in your society, and that of your family, and most highly do I esteem you.”

“Then pray let me continue as I am!” he

said, "as if nothing more had passed between us—I have been, I fear, too hasty, and time——"

"No! Mr. Spalding," interrupted Mary. "You must not deceive yourself, neither will I mislead you. It is not probable any alteration in my sentiments towards you can arise."

"Then it is as I dreaded," he replied, turning pale; "your affections are bestowed upon another."

"That does not necessarily follow," she replied rather haughtily, "unless Mr. Spalding considers himself perfectly irresistible, and that no young lady has a right to refuse him."

"Nay; now you are offended, Miss Maitland."

"Impertinent conjectures, even from one's oldest friends, are not very palatable," she replied; "and in that number, Mr. Spalding can scarcely yet be included."

"I beg a thousand pardons, for my presumption," said he, bowing low; "but pray forgive me—indeed, on my honour, I did not intend to

offend ; and for worlds, I would not incur your displeasure."

"Then, Mr. Spalding, you will not renew this subject, or," she said rather more gaily, "I shall be seriously displeased."

Spalding, mortified though not entirely desponding, led her to his sister and Miss Donaldson ; and she had been scarcely seated between them before Harry Howard approached, and from the deadly pallor that overspread her features, as he stood before her, and her fruitless attempt to conceal her emotion, Spalding decided in his mind, "that is the man she prefers to me !"

Harry had arrived, to use John Power's expression, "*just in the nick of time* ;" that is to say, it is very probable that Miss Maitland, under her feelings of offended pride, and yielding to her mother's solicitations, might have permitted (though not at that time definitively accepted) Mr. Spalding's addresses, and, perhaps, have married him at last, without feeling any ardent attachment, and trusting for happiness

to esteem and regard, which she certainly felt towards him, though love was out of the question.

On Harry's walking away with his partner, Spalding, who lingered near, remarked to Lucy, "Mr. Howard, I conclude, is an old friend of yours and Miss Maitland's."

"Oh yes," she replied; "but he has seldom of late honoured us with his company."

"Yet he appears, without hesitation, not only to claim, but expect the privilege of walking off with your fair friend, as if she scarcely dared to refuse him."

"They are neighbours in the country, and were once very great friends," replied Lucy.

"There is some deeper feeling than friendship between them," added Spalding, in a dejected tone; "and much that has seemed mysterious to me is now explained."

"Ah! Power," exclaimed Major Dundonald, as they met; "what a confounded marplot you are! always spoiling sport."

"How so, Major?"

“Spalding would have been all right, but for your meddling, and putting Harry Howard up to the game he was playing.”

“Old friends, before new faces,” replied Power.

“Very well! that’s right enough,” retorted the Major; “but Spalding’s a better match ten to one than your friend Harry, and you have done Miss Maitland no great service in bringing him forward again, when all was going on so smoothly with Spalding, who has lots of money, and could make a capital settlement on her; besides which, he is an excellent fellow, and desperately in love with her.”

“Harry was first on the list,” rejoined Power, “and I’ll back him right and left, against all the Spaldings and Dundases in Europe, for warmth of heart, honesty, and sound principles; and if he don’t make Mary Maitland as happy as a bird, I don’t know what a woman requires. They are both pets of mine, and I’ll serve them with heart and soul.”

“No doubt of that,” said the Major; “only

I wish you had been in London instead of Bath to-night."

"Ha! Ha! Major—don't be grumpy, plenty for your friend to pick and choose from, without carrying off another man's sweetheart. Good-bye, Dundonald, I shall have a turn with your sister now. Ta—ta, old fellow. Love to Spalding, and better luck to him next time."

The next moment Power was standing before Miss Dundonald.

"May I have the honour, Miss Dundonald; I am in a rare dancing humour to-night, and want to talk to you about old times and old friends;" and he led her forth. "Ah! Miss Dundonald," said he, "your brother is a little bit out of sorts to-night, because, he says, I have put his friend's nose out of joint, by bringing Harry here. You understand, don't you?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Power, I comprehend your meaning, and I fear you have done more mischief than good."

"You say so, Miss Dundonald! Then times are changed, indeed, and people too, most won-

derfully, within the last few months. By Jove ! I've shot at a pigeon and killed a crow. I numbered you amongst Harry's true friends ; but I beg your pardon for my mistake."

"You are not mistaken, Mr. Power," she replied ; "but I love Mary dearly, and I think she has been most unfairly treated by Mr. Howard."

"Indeed ! Miss Dundonald ; then I, who know more about the business than you possibly can, must beg to differ from you. There have been faults on both sides, and Harry is not so culpable as you suppose."

"I am glad you think so," she replied, "but your friend should have known his own mind, and not by his neglect have occasioned poor Mary such unhappiness. Poor thing, no one but myself can tell what she has gone through, and I dread a repetition of it, as Mr. Howard is so very jealous and captious at trifles, and may not mean seriously after all. Should such be the case, you have only opened the wound that was in a fair way of healing, to bleed afresh, and

prevented her accepting a most amiable and superior person, who I am sure would strain every nerve to make her happy ; that is my opinion, Mr. Power. The consequences of your friend again coming forward at this critical moment may be most disastrous."

"Let me calm your apprehensions," replied Power ; "I know Harry's heart, and persuaded him to be here to-night, to prevent its being broken as well as your friend's, for had she married Spalding in pique, there had been two in their graves before long, instead of one. You don't know Harry's feelings as I do, and I have a pretty strong persuasion about Mary Maitland's, also."

"Still, Mr. Power, unless you are quite convinced that Mr. Howard really intends to marry her, you have only done more mischief than good."

"That Harry Howard will never marry any other girl, I am as well satisfied as that I am now standing in this room."

"Well, Mr. Power, I do indeed rejoice to

hear this, knowing how truly she has always loved him, and does still; and yet I am much grieved for Mr. Spalding. He is such a nice young man."

"Oh, I dare say," replied Power; "keeps tame rabbits, and all that sort of thing, and gins foxes, I'll engage. Looks like a fellow who would do so—taking his constitutional ride up Lansdown Road, instead of a good gallop with the hounds. Bah! I detest such molly-coddles."

"But his mother objects to his hunting, because it is such a dangerous amusement."

"Dangerous! to be sure it is, or there would be no fun in it. Poor dear boy! she had better buy him a paper kite to fly on the Downs. Well, well, *chacun à son gout*, as they say in France; but to compare such a spooney as that with Harry; *Ma foi!*" exclaimed Power, with a quizzical shrug of his shoulders. "Hah! hah! hah! look there, Miss Dundonald, there's that dandified Bengal Cavalry Captain, dancing opposite, with the calves of his legs turned

inside out. There's another of your apron-stringed fellows. By all that's quizzical, that chap wears padded calves; I always thought so; well, that's rich, indeed."

"Oh, Mr. Power," said Lucy, almost choking with laughter, "how very ridiculous he looks. Poor man! can't you give him a hint?"

"Not for the world," exclaimed Power; "he is too conceited a fellow for my pity—let him alone."

All in the dance, seeing Miss Dundonald's ill-suppressed merriment, and Power's ludicrous grimaces, soon discovered the object of their entertainment, and burst into fits of laughter, which made the Captain, from the direction of their looks, suspect all was not right about his lower limbs.

"Why does such a fellow wear tights," continued Power, "when his leg is just, like mine, only fit for a boot? Gad! Miss Dundonald, I suspect half these dandified fellows wear stays as well as padding. But what the dickens is that other chap about, throwing his coat over

his partner's shoulders? Oh dear! oh la! I see it all—that comes of ladies wearing low dresses, with a slip knot, I suppose, on their shoulders. Here's a disaster, indeed."

"Poor thing!" added Lucy, "how very distressing!"

"Oh, of course—much to be pitied. Why, the men will be turned into women, and the women into men, devilish soon, if things go on in this fashion. Egad! she's stripped for fighting already, down to the waist."

"For shame, Mr. Power!" said Lucy; "how can you be so cruel and unmannerly as to laugh at the poor girl's distress."

"Well, I can't help it—served her right, for trying to show more than her neighbours—but come along now, and let's find Harry, and tell him the fun; he has had time enough to make his peace, and I'll warrant, Miss Dundonald, he is a man every inch, without a padded leg or glass eye. There's no humbug about your pet or mine; and by Jupiter Ammon! as Harry's governor says, they shall be man and

wife, if Jack Power has any voice in the matter."

Harry's arm had been offered and accepted, and he felt relieved of a load of care and apprehension, although a little annoyed at his partner's silence.

"Will you," he said, at last, "allow me the privilege of an old friend once more, to enquire what is the cause of your present illness?—it pains me to see your pale looks. Dr. Salter is very clever, I wish you would see him."

"Oh no," she replied, "I feel much stronger, and hope, in a few days, to be quite well; but I am equally obliged by your kind wish, although I can scarcely look upon Mr. Howard now as an old friend—he is more like a new acquaintance — we have not seen you for months."

"And was there not a good cause for my absence, after the very flattering reception I met with at Elm Grove from the Miss Archers and yourself, when you so thoroughly despised my

advice? Now, did I deserve such treatment at your hands? or do you think my heart is made of stone?"

"Indeed," she said, "I deeply regret to have pained you; but before that time, your long absence from Elm Grove, impressed me with the idea that you had ceased altogether to regard me as a friend."

"Even for that absence also you have only yourself to blame," replied Harry; "for by your cold, repulsive manner one morning, when I called, you drove me from your presence."

"Illness and low spirits may explain my conduct on that occasion."

"And yet you evinced no respect for my advice, in accepting that invitation to Oakley Park."

"It was by mamma's desire I accepted it, for change of air and scene after my illness, during which you called, and never even inquired after me, or expressed any sorrow for it, so mamma told me; was this kind?—and was I not from

that day justified in thinking all your interest in me (even as a neighbour) had entirely ceased?"

"So little reliance can be placed on outward appearances," said Harry. "I called that morning for the express purpose of ascertaining the real state of your health, and your mother gave me all the information I required. My anxiety about you was confined to my own breast, for, notwithstanding your indifference, I still watched over you as a brother. But have I not heard of your excessive gaiety this season?—Not a ball or party where Miss Maitland was not to be found, and dancing the whole night, twice very often with the same partner. Rumour has also been very busy with your name, and assigned you as engaged to more than one person; so little regard for the advice of a friend is not very flattering."

"I did not believe," she replied, "I possessed that friend any longer; and as other girls did the same, I did not consider there was any great impropriety in it, especially as it is pleasanter

dancing with those I know, than being introduced to strangers."

"Did you ever hear these lines?" said Harry—

" ' Absent or dead, a friend should still be dear ;
The absent claim a sigh, the dead a tear.' "

" Those relate to a true friend unavoidably absent or lost for ever, not to a fickle friend."

" If you apply that epithet to me, Miss Maitland, it is better we part now and for ever."

" No, no ; how can I forget all your former kindness to me ? But your long absence from our house has really pained us all ; every one has remarked it, but we have felt it."

" So has Harry Howard, —more, perhaps, than any one. Are you now satisfied it has not been occasioned by fickleness or caprice on my part ?"

" Well," she replied, with one of her sweetest smiles, " I suppose I must admit that, and will be more careful for the future."

“ I heard you were going into Devonshire for change of air ; will you go now ? ”

“ I cannot tell you,” she replied ; “ but let us return to the ball-room.”

As they were leaving the card-room, they met John Power and Miss Dundonald.

“ Oh, you truants ! ” said John ; “ we were just coming to look for you—but it’s all right, I see. But, seriously speaking, Miss Maitland, what with fits of jealousy and other attacks to which my friend Harry is subject, he is much to be pitied, and you both look alarmingly ill ; but change of scene won’t do in your case—*‘ Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt. ’* ”

“ Come, John, no more of the classics to-night ; it is not polite to quote Latin in ladies’ society.”

“ I beg pardon for speaking in an unknown tongue, but I will render my Latin into English for the benefit of the ladies, in the words of the old song—

‘ Oh, this love ! this love !
Of this love I’m weary ;
Sleep I can get none,
For thinking of my deary.
Oh, this love ! ’ ”

“ There, John, that will do—you are incorrigible ; but where is your deary, Miss Lennox ? ”

“ Dancing and flirting away as usual, with that insufferable coxcomb Bob ; confound that fellow ! he’s always in my way as well as yours ; but the first opportunity I’ll ride over him if I can, and spoil his good looks.”

They now returned to the ball-room, and stood up in a quadrille.

“ You must only dance one more to-night,” said Harry, “ and that with me.”

“ Oh, I feel quite well again now,” she replied, “ and could dance the whole night.”

“ Then it must be with me, for to-night I claim the privilege of an old friend and Mentor ; and you must not engage to dance with any one else.”

“That’s hardly fair,” she replied.

“Then I must go a point further, and tell you I am really unhappy to see you looking so ill, and will not allow you to quit my side this evening. The next ball you attend I may not be there to control you.”

“And why not?” she inquired.

“That depends on your compliance with my wishes now. Mrs. Selwyn will thank me, I know, for my care of you to-night, and you will also in the morning.”

“I suppose, then, I must submit.”

Harry would not trust his partner from his side that evening ; her pale looks distressed him beyond measure ; he believed himself the cause of all her illness, and now to show to herself and the world the true nature of his feelings, the time was come. She had been hardly tried already, though never found wanting in her fixed attachment to him, for whose sake she had refused so many advantageous offers. Her returning gaiety of manner and happy looks satisfied the hitherto sceptical Harry that her

heart was now (as it had indeed long been) all his own. At his earnest desire she was persuaded to leave the gay scene early that night, Harry felt he had regained the dearly-loved prize he had so nearly lost.

CHAPTER VII.

As Lord Barnard's family returned to Bath for the winter season, Robert Howard became a constant visitor at the house, accompanying them to many parties, and might be seen almost every night in Lady Barnard's private box at the theatre, which, from her ill state of health, formed her chief amusement. His attentions to her beautiful Julia had never relaxed, and he had gone so far as to obtain Lady Barnard's sanction to his suit. His feelings of vanity were thus gratified, but beyond this there is little more to add ; for of genuine attachment he felt nothing.

Reports had reached him that Lord Barnard, although possessing very large landed estates, was not likely, as they were entailed, to bestow any large dowers upon his daughters on their marriage, although at his and Lady Barnard's decease they would each be entitled to a very handsome fortune. Mr. Robert Howard, with his usual foresight in such matters, considered the bird in hand worth two in the bush, and therefore began to look about in other quarters to find a young lady more suited to his expectations; in other words, his resolution was taken not to marry without a good round sum of money in hand to start in life with. As to breaking Julia's heart or any other girl's by his attentions, that concerned him very little. "They must take care of their own, as he did of his."

And yet Mr. Robert Howard was not a very extraordinary character in this respect, or a greater Bluebeard than hundreds of other young men about town, who act precisely upon the same principles (or, I should rather say, without any principle at all): they will dance and flirt

with any pretty girl who takes their fancy, and carry their attentions to any extent short of a proposal ; what may become of their victim afterwards, is of no concern to them.

It was about this time that a Mr. Burt, a gentleman of foreign extraction and large fortune, paid a visit to Bath for the benefit of his daughter's health. Miss Burt had now reached her twentieth year ; she was short in stature, without any pretensions to beauty, but pleasing in manners and highly accomplished. She was introduced to Mr. Robert Howard at Mr. Selwyn's, who had known her father when travelling on the Continent some years previously. Robert was invited to a dinner-party soon afterwards, with Harry Howard and John Power, at which Miss Burt was present ; and when the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Mr. Selwyn remarked to Robert,—

“ Well, how do you like Miss Burt ? ”

“ Nothing particular to admire in her,” he replied, in his usual off-hand manner ; “ plain, but agreeable, rather.”

“ Ah !” laughingly said Mr. Selwyn ;
“ some young men would think her very
pretty indeed, if they knew as much as I do.”

“ And pray, Mr. Selwyn, what could make
that girl pretty ?”

“ Forty thousand pounds,” was the reply.

“ Forty thousand pounds !” echoed Bob, in
amazement ; “ surely, you are joking, Mr. Sel-
wyn.”

“ Indeed I am not ; her father intends giving
her somewhere about that sum if she marries a
man he approves of.”

“ Then, by Jove ! he is just the sort of father-
in-law I should like to meet with.”

Robert said no more, but his thoughts were
fully occupied, and golden visions fled before
his mind’s eye.

“ Why, Bob,” said Harry, “ you appear in a
brown study to-night ; has Lady Mary cast
you off, or have you gone a point too far, and
been accepted ?”

“ No fear of that, Master Harry.”

“ Well, then, I conclude you are reckoning

up how much per annum forty thousand pounds will give in the three per cents."

"Wrong again; I don't marry any girl for money."

At which John Power gave a low, significant whistle. On returning to the ladies, Mr. Robert Howard begged Miss Maitland to introduce him to her interesting young friend, as he chose to call Miss Burt, and all his artillery of adulation and compliment were quickly directed against this hitherto impregnable fortress, which, sooth to say, appeared ready to yield to this handsome stranger's first assault.

In fact, Miss Burt thought she had never seen so pleasing, elegant, and fascinating a creature of the "genus homo" before. Music being the order of the night, Robert was very pressing for a song, which was at first declined, on the plea of ill health, but on further importunity she acceded to his request, and was led to the piano in the most polite manner by Mr. Robert Howard.

The easy and rapid manner with which her

fingers ran over the keys of that instrument soon satisfied Robert, as well as the whole company, that she was no common performer ; but when she began to sing, a dead silence prevailed throughout the room, only broken by exclamations of delight. Bob was in raptures, of course, and begged for another song, but instead of granting his request, she played a very difficult though beautiful piece of music, with such taste and execution, as scarcely any but a finished artist could accomplish ; in fact, such an impression was made on all hearers, that other young ladies could scarcely be prevailed upon to succeed her at the piano.

John Power whispered in Robert's ear as he passed—

“ She'll do, Bob, won't she ? ”

Harry Howard, who had been sitting with Miss Maitland, told her she would have a good deal to answer for in introducing her friend to Robert, for that he was convinced he would try hard for the forty thousand.

“ Oh,” she said, “ I do not think her good-

looking enough for him. You never see him taken with any but pretty girls."

"Take my word for it, Robert has a very discursive imagination; and I'll bet you a pair of gloves he tells you he considers her quite pretty; that he will marry her if he can have the money, I feel perfectly assured."

"I think you are very hard upon your cousin."

"I know him much better," replied Harry, "than I hope you ever will."

Miss Maitland then rose to join her mother; but Harry soon after observed her in earnest conversation with Robert, and rightly guessed the subject. John Power and Harry had also a little speculative talk on the same topic.

"Bob is caught with the golden hook at last," observed the former; "the forty thousand has settled the business, and I can see with the lady it is a decided case of love at first sight—they are in for it, Harry, if Mynheer Van Trump comes down with the guilders; and if they won't wish each other at the antipodes

before the honeymoon is over (one of them at least—I'll answer for my friend Bob), then John Power don't know a fox from a jackall."

"Well, John, I am of your opinion, there will be a good deal of false swearing at the honeymoon altar on one side: and if Robert don't kick that bale of Dutch goods down stairs before he has been married a fortnight, or commit some such enormity, I'll beg Bob's pardon for having misled him."

"Well," said John, "for better or worse, you know, they must settle the business after their own fashion: but I suspect it will be pretty much in the same manner as the monkey and cat I once saw shut up in a box together. They were very good friends up at that time, as long as they enjoyed liberty and freedom of action. Jack was very fond of puss, and puss appeared highly pleased with Jack's polite attentions; but by jingo! when they were boxed together, Malincol and Bebban's highest notes were 'sotto voce' in comparison: the din was terrific, and the moment the door was opened,

Jocko fled with precipitation in one direction, and pussy in the other."

"This, I've a notion, will be Bob's case, with that little fat, round improvisatrice of a musician. That execution, Harry, as they term it, is the very devil to my ears. I can't endure it. Music, indeed! why the firing of church bells is melody to that rattling and hammering on the piano—'Concordia discors.' Harry, what think you?"

"It does not suit my ears either, John. 'Music has charms to soothe the troubled mind;' at least, that is the sort of music most agreeable to me——"

"Well," said John, "there's one comfort—Bob will have a kettle tied to his tail which he won't get rid of in a hurry; but I do believe, if that little Myne Frow treats Bob to much of that execution after they are married (it's uncommonly fine just now), he'll kick the piano into shivers, and Myne Frow into fits. Only just look at him now, Harry, with that Italian song, she is screeching out. Hang it! you would

think he knew it all by heart, by his look and manner in turning over the leaves, and yet he knows no more of the living languages (his own excepted), of French, Italian, German, &c., than a Hottentot."

"Come, John, that's enough for one night. You don't spare Bob when you can have a fling at him."

"And I don't intend to do so, Harry; he has made a flirt and a fool of the girl I loved, and he has tried hard to perform the same kind service for you. Why should I spare such a puppy as that?"

They were interrupted by Miss Maitland stepping across the room to request silence.

"I humbly beg pardon," said John; "but I could hardly suppose our sweet voices would be heard above that uproar at the piano."

"Oh! for shame, Mr. Power, to call such superior playing an uproar."

"Bad taste, I dare say, Miss Maitland," replied John; "but it does not suit my ear: however, your wishes are commands," with a bow.

She was turning away, when Harry said—

“I think you owe me a pair of gloves, for I can guess the purport of Robert’s interesting conversation with you.”

“Miss Burt is a charming and pretty person by this time ; is it not so ?”

“I don’t think the latter word was used ; but charming, I believe, was, and you must admit, from her playing and singing, she is justly entitled to that compliment at least.”

“It is not exactly in my style,” replied Harry ; “but being the fashion just now, and backed by Robert’s opinion also, that is enough.”

As she turned away, Power remarked—

“‘That snake is not scotched yet ;’ he will cause you more trouble than you fancy. Women won’t believe what men say of each other ; they think them envious or jealous. Bob is certainly still a favourite with your fair friend, and I have been told lately, although I don’t believe it, that he would not have been refused a short time since, had he proposed.”

“Who is your authority?” asked Harry, considerably excited.

“I cannot tell you now; but I intend fishing it out to the bottom, and then you shall know all. Mind, however, what I have before said on this subject. I do not think she ever would marry any man but yourself, so don’t fidget about idle gossip.”

This unsettled Harry for the remainder of the evening; he became restless, gloomy, and thoughtful, and, as John Power left, retired into the back drawing-room, and sat down by himself looking over some prints.

Miss Maitland had been occupied the whole evening with her mother’s guests, who were now leaving for more exciting scenes at a large ball given that evening by a lady of distinction, when, observing Harry in the room, she approached him, saying—“I fear you have thought our party very dull.”

“Yes,” he replied, “it has been dull to me, because you have been so wholly engrossed with others, to my almost utter exclusion.”

“ You forget that mamma is not well to-night, and I have been obliged to take her place and do the honours.”

“ Oh ! of course,” replied Harry, “ I know men are very selfish sometimes ; but as you were to return that fan whenever you were tired of Harry Howard—may he take it now ?”

“ No !” she said, “ on that condition you will never have it more.”

“ Well then, you must do penance for your neglect, by sitting with me half an hour, and telling me all about Miss Burt.”

“ That I cannot do, until the company have left, and perhaps not then.”

“ Good - night ! then,” said Harry, hastily rising. “ I shall look in at Lady Belton’s ball, and, perhaps, may find a partner there to chat with for half an hour.”

Harry was vexed with what John Power had told him, and his suspicions about Miss Maitland’s partiality for Robert Howard again took possession of his mind ; her manner was always the same to him, and their looks and conversa-

tion also, when together, were cheerful and gay ; but to Harry she was often reserved, and sometimes he thought quite distant. What could this mean ? Perhaps, in her heart she preferred Robert, only he had not proposed.

“ Well,” thought Harry, “ I must see John Power, and know his authority ; for if she does, or ever has loved that fellow Bob, happiness with me is out of the question. I will stick to the hunting, and leave these scenes altogether.”

Power’s information was derived from the gay widow, a near neighbour of Mr. Selwyn’s, at whose parties Miss Maitland and Robert Howard had often been present. Robert’s constant attentions had been carefully observed by this lady, who having also a great propensity for match-making, considered it as “ *une affaire accompli*,” adding, “ that she was quite in Miss Maitland’s confidence.”

Moreover, a friend of Robert’s had given Power the same information.

Harry’s heart sank within him at this intelligence, and he said, “ Whatever I may feel, my

resolution is taken (if this be true), and why not?"

"It wants confirmation, Harry, that's all; but still I don't know what to think. At any rate, I will search as deep as possible into this affair; we shall have a month's hunting before the grand fancy ball. You'll be cool by that time, and I'll be prepared with better information."

Harry now rode more desperately than ever, and his horse falling upon him, injured his knee severely.

John Power gave his version of the accident in his usual intelligent manner to Miss Maitland.

"Oh! that horrid hunting!" she exclaimed.

"Oh! that horrid flirting," echoed John; "that will be the death of poor Harry. As kind hearted and good a fellow as ever lived. Confound all flirting, say I; the comparison between an honest, true-spoken fellow like him, and a double-faced, money-seeking, false-hearted baboon. Pshaw! It won't bear thinking of."

“What do you mean, Mr. Power? Is Mr. Howard seriously injured?”

“And what would it signify to all the giddy girls in Bath, if his neck were broken? We men think differently of him,” replied Power. “We shall feel his loss, at any rate.”

Miss Maitland began to be really alarmed at Power’s serious manner as he uttered these last words. She turned deadly pale, and said, in the most earnest tones—

“Oh! pray tell me, Mr. Power, is he much injured?”

No answer was returned, but a look to search her inmost soul.

“Why don’t you tell me, Mr. Power?—pray don’t keep me in this suspense. He has been a kind friend to me, and I am most anxious to know the truth.”

“A more approved person (not friend) than Harry Howard, is approaching to ask Miss Maitland’s hand. Harry’s fate will keep—” said Power, pretending to turn away.

“No! Mr. Power, you must not leave me so.

I will not dance until I hear the truth from your lips."

"Then you must refuse Mr. Howard, and come with me. I won't tell you more in that fellow's presence; make your election therefore."

She took his arm, and all Bob's eloquence could not persuade her to resign it.

"Now, Mr. Power, (when Robert had left them) tell me candidly all."

Power told his story in his own peculiar style, and drew his own conclusions from her manner of receiving it.

"And now, Miss Maitland, if there is any message or kind word I can convey to your friend (your only true one, mind)—I shall see him to-morrow; but dancing will be out of the question for some time to come."

"You can tell him, Mr. Power, how distressed I am to hear of his accident, but that I hope he may be well enough soon to come in to a ball, though not to dance, and I will promise to sit, or walk a quadrille or two, with him."

"Spoken like a good, unaffected girl," said

Power; "and now you may dance with any one you prefer to plain-spoken Jack."

Power was no inattentive observer of human nature in all its various forms and phases; but woman-kind was an enigma he could not quite comprehend. How could a girl, thought he, really attached to one man, be dancing and laughing, and apparently on the most friendly terms with others. Yet this was the case before him, if he could credit his own senses.

Such, however, is the general behaviour of women—they display gaiety of manner to those who are indifferent to them, and reserve towards those they really love.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE must now introduce another personage on the scene—a younger brother of Harry Howard's, who was just at this time making his appearance in public. Harold in no respect resembled his brother, being short in stature, delicate in constitution, plain in appearance, and selfish in disposition ; added to which, he had the misfortune, from being sickly, to have been a spoilt child.

Having expressed a desire to attend the grand fancy ball, and his wish being gratified, he was now intent on choosing a costume for the occasion ; and, knowing the Selwyns, he paid a visit

to their town house, to consult Miss Maitland on this all-important matter.

He was, of course, kindly received, and asked to dine with them—which, being the first invitation of the kind he had ever received, flattered him exceedingly. He should be so delighted, and then they could talk about his costume after dinner.

A full account of Harry's accident was thus obtained by Miss Maitland, and Mrs. Selwyn desired her kind regards to him, expressing the hope that he would soon be able to pay them a visit.

In the meantime, Mr. Robert Howard had obtained the desired introduction to Miss Burt's father, upon whom his appearance and manners made a very favourable impression, and he was soon favoured with an invitation to dine with him at the York Hotel, where they were then staying. He made frequent calls also at Mr. Selwyn's, where he often had an opportunity of meeting the young lady without the surveillance of her papa.

Miss Burt, with the freedom of foreigners, soon made her friend the depository of her secret attachment to Robert, which she declared had been love at first sight.

Thus matters were progressing, until the evening of the ball.

Harry, though still a little lame, resolved to be present, and on entering the lobby met Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn and Miss Maitland, who had arrived just before him. After the usual greetings had passed, her hand was asked for the first quadrille ; but, when taking his arm, Miss Maitland said,—

“ Perhaps you had better not dance to-night.”

“ Well then, I will perform dandy for once, and walk through the figure. Mrs. Selwyn may not like our sitting down together at first,” replied Harry ; “ it will appear too particular ; but I shall claim your promise later in the evening, as made through John Power—the third quadrille from this, as I see Robert coming, who will of course ask for the next. What a lucky fellow he is, always to be in such favour.”

“Well! here he comes. May he have the honour of dancing the next quadrille?”

“Of course he may.”

“There is no of course, Mr. Howard, in the case; but, being disengaged, I shall not be so rude as to refuse him. Why should I?”

“Oh! certainly not; and, if report speaks true, he could be refused nothing.”

Bob prevented more being said at that moment, and having obtained his request, marched off again.

When he had left them, Miss Maitland asked to what report Harry alluded.

“I will tell you more when we cannot be overheard as now — the third quadrille, mind, after this.”

They then talked on indifferent subjects—a throng of spectators crowding round the dancers on every side.

The quadrille over, Bob soon claimed his partner, with whom he walked off, throwing a triumphant look at Harry, who feeling stiff from his accident, sat down on the first vacant seat.

Perhaps one of Robert Howard's worst failings was, utter selfishness and total disregard of every other man's feelings but his own.

He was a perfect dog in the manger ; for upon observing another paying attention to any pretty girl, his first determination was to cut him out without intending anything more. He had treated John Power in this manner, who had become really attached to a very pretty and interesting young girl who was not proof against Robert's handsome face and flattering attentions ; in fact, from long experience, he had acquired the art of sham love-making at the cost of many a young girl's peace of mind.

It is not therefore to be wondered at that Robert was so disliked by the other young men of his own standing. Harry watched him flirting with her he so dearly loved, with feelings of impatience and disgust, although she treated him with more reserve than usual. This night, however, Harry decided should terminate his state of suspense, and that she should decide between Robert or him.

The dance being concluded, he sought Miss Maitland among the crowd in the ball-room. She was not there, but guessing Robert's intentions, he went into the card room, and there found them together.

"I am sorry to disturb so agreeable a *tête-à-tête*," said Harry, quickly following up as he observed Bob hurry away in another direction; "but I am come to claim your promise, Miss Maitland," as he overheard her telling Robert she was engaged to his cousin, in answer to his suit for another quadrille. He then withdrew, and for some time they were both silent.

Having led his partner to a vacant seat in a retired nook, apart from eaves-droppers, Harry broke the silence by saying,—

"I promised to acquaint you with the report I had heard; but as it seems so confirmed, it needs no further remark from me."

"But I wish to know the report, Mr. Howard."

He then recapitulated all he had heard as coming from the gay widow, at which she appeared agitated and offended.

“Really,” she said, “this is very unkind of Mrs. Askew, to circulate such indelicate and unfounded reports. My confidence she has never possessed, nor is it likely she ever should have been a friend of mine.”

“Your conduct, to all outward appearance, confirms that lady’s representations,” said Harry, gravely; “you have chiefly yourself to blame. This is really the case, although you seem not to be aware of it.”

“And can *you* take part against me, Mr. Howard?”

“Not willingly, you know full well; but the time has arrived when you must decide between a true friend and a false one. I have for years watched over and loved you, with all a brother’s care, and more than a brother’s fondness. No one can tell with what anxiety—with more than the love of parent, friend, or brother; and can you think I can bear to see you on such terms as these with one I so entirely disapprove of, and who has lent himself to speak so lightly of you? Review my past conduct from the time I

engaged to stand in the place of your poor cousin Stewart ; have I ever flinched from or deserted the trust I then so solemnly undertook ? and have you not often treated me with reserve, and sometimes with indifference ? This conflict within my breast I can endure no longer. You have been giddy, and thoughtless, perhaps, but you have nearly broken the truest heart that ever beat in human bosom. Were your loved cousin now here, he would know with what fidelity the trust I undertook has been observed. I now resign it, and may Heaven watch over and protect you." Harry's emotions quite overcame him ; he buried his face in his hands for a few moments, then suddenly rising, said, " Come, let me take you to Mr. Selwyn. I am racked to torture, and shall leave these scenes now and for ever."

" Oh, no, not yet," she exclaimed ; " you will not surely leave me thus. Hear, at least, my defence."

" One word will answer all," said Harry—

“who holds the first place in your affections, Robert or Harry Howard?—that is the question.”

“There can be no hesitation in my reply,” she said; “certainly not the former.”

Harry felt relieved of a monstrous pressure—he hesitated not a moment longer.

“Then tell me in sincerity, has Harry Howard’s long dream of happiness been realised at last? Have you, notwithstanding all my jealous and strange conduct, loved, and loved me only?”

No response being given to this question, it was repeated.

“Come,” said Harry, extending his hand, “give me the fan or your hand. One I must have to-night.”

Her hand was timidly placed in his, when, observing her violent emotion, Harry promptly proposed her taking a turn with him round the room—fortunately he did so, or she would have fainted.

Mary Maitland, although long attached to

Harry, had never, until this night, been satisfied as to his real sentiments towards herself. She fancied his affection only that of a dear friend or brother, and when the truth was so abruptly revealed by Harry, she was so overpowered by surprise and sudden delight at finding all her fondest hopes realised, that she became literally spell-bound, and could return no answer.

Harry witnessing her distress and agitation, and suspecting the cause, to divert her thoughts, proposed their return to the ball-room, and joining the dancers. Among that gay throng, Harry and Mary were now the happiest of the happy, and so completely engrossed by their own rapturous feelings, that the lapse of time passed unheeded, until Harry suddenly exclaimed,—

“What will your mother say to our long absence from her? we must return immediately, or you will be severely lectured.”

Mrs. Selwyn looked offended when they joined her, but the door of the supper-room being just then thrown open, she made no re-

marks ; but after supper, pleading fatigue and illness, she ordered her carriage, and was accompanied home by Mary, who reluctantly bade adieu to her lover.

CHAPTER IX.

As Harry, a few nights after his proposal, was sitting in the coffee-room of his hotel, he became the unwilling hearer of a conversation between two gentlemen in the adjoining compartment, who had just returned from the rooms; one of them, Mr. Harrison, a man about town, and a great ally of Robert's, although personally unknown to Harry; and the other, Mr. Roche, a gentleman of good fortune, who had taken up his residence in the gay city for the season.

"Why, Roche," said Mr. Harrison, "you were uncommonly sweet upon Miss Maitland to-night, following her about, and even standing

behind her when dancing with other men. I watched you, my boy."

"Well, Tom, she is the prettiest, most lady-like girl I have ever been acquainted with. The more I see of her, the more I admire her; she is so different to the flirting, forward girls we meet with, all so ready to jump at any fellow who has money, that they really disgust one. Forbidden or scarce fruit, Tom, seems always the best, and we prize most what takes most trouble to obtain. Half the girls in the world who want to get married, by their own conduct actually prevent men falling in love with them—that's the real truth."

"You are quite right, Roche, there can be no difference of opinion on that point; but you won't get that girl, Tom, much as you may fancy her."

"And why not, Tom? I can make a good settlement, which will satisfy any papa or mamma; and for herself, I am not a hang-dog-looking fellow, that a girl should look shy upon."

"No, no, I mean no reflection on your fortune

or person ; for you are a handsome, fine-looking stalwart chap, as any woman could desire ; but you won't marry Miss Maitland, notwithstanding—for Robert Howard tells me she is in love with him, which her behaviour partly confirms, and his cousin also is very particular in his attentions ; one of these two will be her choice, and Bob is the man, I believe ; in short, he told me as much a month ago, that he could marry her whenever he liked."

"Well, Tom, that is not very agreeable news ; but I don't care much about Robert, who is dancing and flirting by turns, with every pretty girl in the room ; and for his cousin, he is a stranger to me, and has only been paying her attention these last few nights, whilst I have been at that game the whole season. I shall most certainly propose to her without more delay."

"I wish you success, my boy ; and now fill a bumper to the health of Mrs. Roche that is to be."

Harry sat listening to this discourse with

feelings better conceived than described. Jealousy again taking possession of his heart.

“Perhaps,” he thought, “she misunderstood my meaning, as men often go great lengths in flirtation, and some may have said as much to her before, or more even than I did that night, without her thinking them in earnest, or me either; or possibly she may have accepted me in a moment of pique, because Robert has not proposed, and may now repent having done so.”

Agitated by these feelings, Harry sought his cousin the next morning, and from his conversation with him, addressed the following letter to Miss Maitland:—

“Judge not too harshly of me, my dear Miss Maitland, from what I am about to write, nor think me under the influence of jealousy or suspicion in tracing words, which honour only dictates. Since last we parted, I have been the unwilling hearer of news which could not fail to awaken me to a sense of the dangerous pre-

cipice on which I might probably be standing. Not to keep you in suspense, I will proceed to state the cause of my alarm ; which was, overhearing in the coffee-room of my hotel, a conversation between two friends of my cousin—the subject of it yourself. One of them affirmed, Robert could at any time command your affections, in which, he said, he had heard him acquiesce ; and afterwards, on my questioning Robert, he pretended a carelessness which I could not fathom. How then was I to act—to whom could I appeal but yourself? Tell me, then, generously confide in one who would rather die than deceive you, and believe me, my dearest Miss Maitland, though I love you most tenderly, most sincerely, more than (and I say much) I believe it possible for any other human being to do, yet am I not so selfish as to prefer my own happiness to yours. Possibly I misunderstood you at the fancy ball—perhaps you only intended friendship, which my bewildered imagination construed into love. In either case you are not deceived. Shall I, who have always

professed myself your friend, now stand back?—never, believe me. Should my cousin, or any other, have a prior or dearer claim upon your affections, I will not suffer my stubborn heart to envy their happiness, but endeavour to persuade myself that you have never been more to me than a friend—kindly entrust me with the feelings of your heart, and rest assured, the world contains not a bribe sufficiently alluring to tempt me to betray the confidence of one whose honour and happiness are dearer to me, many times more than my own life. Whether Robert's heart or his vanity is most concerned, I know not, but will endeavour to ascertain, after I receive your answer. Think me not envious of my cousin; I am not ignorant that Nature has been more bountiful to him than to myself. He may win many hearts to my one, but I am content to take my station among lesser stars, and glitter in a humbler sphere. Once more, believe me, my dear Miss Maitland, that whether henceforth you consider me as a friend or lover, never shall you have reason to repent

your choice, of your most devoted and affectionate

“HENRY HOWARD.”

In reply to this, the following most gratifying and candid answer was returned :—

“ Bath.

“ You have asked me to tell you candidly all my feelings. After the noble and generous manner in which you have treated me, I think you entitled to my fullest confidence, and therefore I do not hesitate to open to you every secret of a heart which for a length of time has been wholly yours. Long did I endeavour to consider you in the light of a friend, for as such merely did I ever suppose you regarded me. That one whom I looked up to as superior to everybody, should have bestowed a thought upon me beyond friendship, was a happiness I could never suffer myself to dwell on, for there seemed so little probability of such hopes being ever realized, that I endeavoured, as much as possible, not to

give way to feelings which must have caused me much misery hereafter. Since I have known you, I have looked up to you as my model of everything good, generous, and noble ; and I trust, in time, with such an example to follow, I may become worthy of the prize which has fallen to my lot, and that you may never repent having bestowed your affections on one who, believe me, fully appreciates the value of them, and who, had she the choice of all the world, would select you. If you think I have said too much and spoken too openly, I know you will impute it to its true cause, the anxious desire I have of removing from your mind every doubt and suspicion you may have imbibed. I write to you (as you wish) without disguise, the genuine feelings of my heart. I think it better, as I *never* could have spoken so candidly to you. With regard to your cousin, believe me, I *never* considered his attentions more than those of a friend and neighbour ; but the raillery of Mrs. Askew on the subject, gave a degree of embarrassment to my manners when talk-

ing to him, that probably he and others witnessing might have construed in a different sense. But allowing your cousin to have honoured me with his regard, *his* is not the character that ever could have made me happy. He is formed too much to shine in society, to render a domestic, quiet life comfortable; and as the pleasure of mine could never consist entirely in seeking amusement everywhere but at home, I imagine our ideas of happiness widely differ. After this candid statement, I leave you to judge whether you have any ground for suspicion. Such a report would have given me much pain, did I not believe you would be convinced of what I tell you now, and I am only vexed that you should have felt a moment's uneasiness on such a subject. One observation you must forgive me for making—I had a higher opinion of your cousin than to have supposed he could have acted so ungenerously towards both you and me. On reading over this letter, I much fear I have trespassed on the bounds of decorum, in expressing my feelings

too candidly and openly. If I have, I hope it will not lessen in your opinion her who is unalterably

“Your attached and affectionate

“MARY MAITLAND.”

How often, and with what intense feelings of gratitude and delight, Harry read over and over these lines, containing such a frank avowal of Mary Maitland's feelings towards him, it is unnecessary to state. He had never till that moment been thoroughly satisfied of her affections having been so wholly and entirely his own, or that from their first acquaintance she had never loved another. All his first hopes and expectations had become now most fully realized, for notwithstanding his deep-rooted love for her, which nothing could change or eradicate, he dreaded lest she had once formed an attachment for his cousin; and that impression, so often confirmed by others, filled him with a never-failing painful anxiety. But now all doubts and suspicions being removed, Harry expe-

rienced, with the most joyous feelings, almost a sense of his own unworthiness of the blessing bestowed upon him, by the pure and undivided love of that dear girl, who had stedfastly refused so many advantageous overtures for his sake.

Flying on the wings of love, Harry sought, without delay, the presence of his dearly-prized Mary, and thanking her most fervently for her most welcome and candid letter, expressed his deep sense of the obligation he felt for the preference she had shown him above all others.

“You have,” he said, “my dearest girl, chosen me before many more rich, more handsome, and more talented; but there is not one who ever loved, or can love you, with more purity of thought or intensity of attachment, than your own Harry.”

“I firmly believe it,” she replied; “and now, dear Harry, never let suspicion cross your mind again, but let mutual confidence subsist between us.”

The engagement between Miss Maitland and

Harry Howard was, at her request, not to be formally announced to her mother or Mr. Selwyn for a few weeks, during which they would be left to the free enjoyment of their reciprocal affections, and join in the public amusements without subjecting themselves to that formal exclusiveness with which an engaged couple is regarded by the world. There is, moreover, very bad taste and want of delicacy, in two young persons parading their love before the public, by dancing or sitting together the whole night at balls or parties to which they are invited. There is a time for all things, and a certain respect due to others as well as ourselves. Harry and Mary being of this opinion, accepted invitations as usual, and were as cordially welcomed as before any engagement existed between them, which would not have been suspected by their general behaviour to each other. In fact, two of Miss Maitland's admirers were so little aware from outward appearances how matters really stood, that they still flattered themselves with the hope of being accepted. Secure of his

affection, and with every wish of her heart gratified, it is not surprising that she appeared to all her friends so buoyant in spirits, cheerful, and happy. The bloom had returned to her cheeks, and she looked more lovely than ever.

John Power made a shrewd guess as to the cause of this sudden alteration, although he would not divulge it to others ; but dancing with her one night, he observed—

“ By Jove, Miss Maitland ! it does my heart good to see you now so charmingly and delightfully happy ; it affords me as much pleasure as a good day’s hunting, and as for Harry, he is as chirping as a cock sparrow.”

“ Oh, Mr. Power !” she exclaimed, “ you have proved a kind and true friend to us both, and I feel indebted to you for much of my present happiness.”

“ There, that will do, Miss Maitland ; I know all you would say ; but is it not fun to see that lack-a-daisical Thorold fancying he is going to catch such a precious fish as you are with his flimsy hooks and eyes ?”

“Nonsense, Mr. Power; he has never paid me any particular attention.”

“Didn’t he, to my knowledge, dance two quadrilles with you one night, which he took for certain encouragement?—and he means to try it on again.”

“Then I shall for the future decline dancing with him again.”

“No, don’t do that; I like to see the fellow making love, he looks so sheepish.”

“Well, Mr. Power, I shall take good care he shall never presume to make love to me.”

“You are right, Harry might be jealous; and mind, he is a confounded green-eyed monster, notwithstanding his kind looks; don’t make sure of him, till he is tied up. By the way, I never asked a favour of you yet, but now I want one.”

“And what may that be, Mr. Power?—Anything you may ask, I think I may safely say I could scarcely refuse.”

“Your confidence in Jack Power, my dear Miss Maitland, is not misplaced; ‘the favour I

ask is to witness the union of those two beings I dearly love, and whose happiness it has ever been my object to promote."

"Oh, Mr. Power," she replied, blushing deeply, "we may not be married for a long time yet; but when that event takes place, you shall not be forgotten."

"Thank you," he said, "I am satisfied; but confound it! marriages are dismal ceremonies to lookers-on, and sometimes to those more deeply concerned; but I never saw two so exactly matched to run in harness as you and Harry are. The road isn't a very smooth one, and you must expect a little uphill work sometimes, but pull together and hold together, and God bless you both; so now the dance is over, I must make my bow, as I see Mr. Thorold approaching, who asked you for the next quadrille."

"I suppose I must dance with him now," she said; "but for the future, I shall treat him very distantly."

CHAPTER X.

MR. THOROLD having been impressed with the idea that his attentions were acceptable to Miss Maitland, was led, by his vanity and assumed knowledge of the female sex, to construe his reception now as a sure proof of her increasing regard for him, and on a friend's remarking afterwards how distantly he had been treated by his partner, he answered—

“Ah, my good fellow! you don't know so much about women as I do. Ladies are sometimes very capricious, which I do not regard, but, on the contrary, consider it a good sign when they behave with reserve occasionally.”

“Very likely, Thorold,” replied his friend; “you have a tolerably good opinion of yourself—no doubt about that; but notwithstanding, you will find it rather a more difficult matter to cut out Harry Howard than you imagine.”

“Then I beg to differ from you,” said Thorold; “I have three strings to *my* bow; *he* has only one, and that, in my judgment, not over strong.”

“Then I will back Harry, my fine fellow, with his one string, against any half-dozen of yours.”

Thorold was nettled by his friend's remarks, and resolved to set all his machinery to work without delay. He had a particular friend in a neighbour of Mr. Selwyn's, who was on very intimate terms with the whole family, Miss Maitland included, and to him he explained his sentiments towards that young lady, with the hope that he would favour his suit. A ready compliance with his wishes having been promised, Thorold next took an opportunity, during Harry's absence, of calling on Mr. Howard,

senior (to whom, having been staying several times at his house, as Harry's friend, he was well known), and trying to prejudice the old gentleman against Miss Maitland and her family. Knowing Mr. Howard's antipathy to foreigners, and his utter detestation of a Bath flirt, he represented Mr. Selwyn as a retired Dutch merchant, very pompous, and fond of money, and his step-daughter as one who was "*setting her cap*" at every young man of good expectations.

"You know, my dear sir," insinuated Thorold, "my great regard for your son Harry, but he is very obstinate and never will follow my advice, and between ourselves, he appears very much taken with this girl, dancing and sitting with her half the night sometimes. You must not, of course, give a hint to Harry that I have said a word to you on this subject, but I thought it my duty to tell you how matters stood."

"I am much obliged to you, Thorold, for your hints," said Mr. Howard, "and will take care my son Harry is not caught by this old

Dutch speculator ; but you will stay and dine with us to-day ?”

“Ah, no, thank you, I have a particular engagement, and, moreover, I do not wish Harry to know of my visit here, or he may suspect my errand.”

Thorold congratulated himself on his return home with the impression he had made on Mr. Howard, and dined with his friend Mr. Elliston, who had also good news to communicate.

“I was on my way to call on Mr. Selwyn this morning,” said he, “when, fortunately meeting Miss Maitland and him, I accompanied them to the Pump Room, and did not fail to mention you in the highest terms, which appeared to be well received ; and I shall have a little conversation with Selwyn the first opportunity, and flatter myself I shall be able to clip Mr. Harry Howard’s wings for him.”

A few days afterwards, as Harry was preparing to attend another ball, his father thought it a good opportunity of questioning him on his frequent visits to the gay city.

“What, going again to-night ! you are always at those confounded Bath balls now. I suspect there is some girl in the case—eh, Harry ?”

“Well, my dear father, you have told me that when young you were as much at balls as I am. Were you in love then with any Bath girl ?”

“No, Harry ; I had too much sense to be caught by any coquette, and I hope you have also ; but I suspect you are dangling after some Bath flirt, notwithstanding.”

“My dear father,” replied Harry, gravely, “my dislike of flirts and Bath misses far exceeds your own—I detest them ; but when I meet with a girl like your favourite heroine Florence Annally, about whom you have been reading this last week, then, perhaps, I may think seriously of marrying, or being in love, at least, but not before.”

“Well, Harry, all I have to say on that point is, that you must not think of marrying yet ; but when you meet with a second ‘Florence Annally,’ like her in every respect, mind, no

counterfeit, then, Harry, you have my free consent to woo and win her if you can, and more, I will welcome her as my own child."

"Thank you, my own dear father," said Harry, taking his hand; "I accept your promise, and will give you mine in return, that I will never marry any girl who does not realise in every particular the character of your favourite heroine."

"Well, Harry, that's a bargain between us; but a little bird whispered to me that you are paying rather marked attention to the daughter of that old Dutch humbug Selwyn."

"Mr. Selwyn is no Dutchman," replied Harry, "but of as good and old an English family as ourselves; but, being a younger son, he was obliged to work his way in the world, and having passed several years on the Continent, married a Dutch lady with a good deal of money. That is his true history, my dear father, and the young lady is in no way related except by her mother marrying him—so some one has been making game of you by telling a pack of lies."

“Take care old Selwyn does not make game of you, my boy, that’s all; for I hear the young lady is a proper flirt, and on the look-out for flats and fools.”

“As I am neither one nor the other, father, make yourself easy on that point; your son Harry is a chip of the old block, and quite up to baits and traps of all kinds, as much as a five-year-old fox;—and now, I’ll just tell you who your little bird is—no other than my dear friend Thorold, who, being up to a few little manœuvres, and thinking old Selwyn will give his stepdaughter a handsome fortune (independent of her own money in right of her father), has made up his mind to carry off the prize, and been humbugging you about her being a flirt, and her father a Dutchman. My dear father,” asked Harry, with rather a quizzical look, “who is the flat now, do you think?”

“Confound that double-faced rascal!” said Mr. Howard; “if I thought he was playing his tricks off upon me, I would double-thong him.”

“ If *you* don’t, I most certainly will, the first opportunity — a sneaking, under-handed scoundrel !”

“ Come, come, Harry, this won’t do—I never told you my information was derived from him, so you cannot notice it, and I must beg you will not mention the subject to him.”

“ Very well ; but now I must be off, so good-night, and I will be home early to-morrow again.”

Thus, Thorold, instead of injuring his friend’s cause promoted it, by affording him an opportunity of this little explanation with his father, which Harry desired so much, without knowing exactly how to introduce the subject. So do weapons, aimed against the innocent and unsuspecting, often recoil with two-fold force on the heads of the wicked projectors.

Mr. Howard pondered over Harry’s words ; and, although Mr. Selwyn was no favourite, yet he thought Harry might be correct as to Thorold’s views in trying to set him against his stepdaughter, so he questioned his youngest son

Harold on the subject, by asking what he thought of Miss Maitland.

“ Oh, papa, she is the nicest, most kind-hearted girl I ever met with, and so pretty—I wish she was my sister.”

“ But don’t she flirt, Harold, very much with the young men ?”

“ No, papa ; but everybody seems in love with her, and she has had no end of offers already.”

“ That may be all nonsense, Harold, just to make people believe it. Who told you this ?”

“ Young Lovelace told me all about it, at the dramatic fête, and that he knew for certain she had refused two men of large fortune this very season, and a lot of others before, at least a dozen.”

“ The deuce she has !” replied Mr. Howard ; “ but what is the reason she does not marry them ?”

“ Why, Lovelace thinks she likes Harry or somebody else, and that she will never marry for money.”

“ Well, there she is right—I like her for that ; but is Harry in love with her, Harold ? ”

“ That I cannot tell, papa, for sometimes they are a good deal together, and at others scarcely speak. Robert seems a great favourite—she is always lively and gay with him, but very distant and quiet in her manner to Harry.”

Mr. Howard was rather puzzled by Harold’s elation, and asked no more questions just then.

Thorold, aware of Miss Maitland’s intention to attend the ball, went early to the rooms, awaiting her arrival, and, on her entering with Mr. Selwyn, immediately joined them, in his usual obsequious way making inquiries about Mrs. Selwyn’s health, and, of course, asked the favour of the first dance.

Miss Maitland declined—she was engaged. Mr. Selwyn, observing her distant manner, whispered—

“ Mary, you are quite rude to Mr. Thorold ; I think, as he is a friend of mine, you might accept his arm.”

“I cannot dance with him the first quadrille, which I promised Mr. Howard ; but if my partner does not arrive before the first set is formed, I will do as you wish.”

Mr. Selwyn communicated her resolution to Mr. Thorold, who followed them into the ball-room, where the sets being forming, he claimed her promise. He had no cause to congratulate himself on a very warm reception, but with some men appearances are almost everything ; and the fact of his dancing with Miss Maitland was, in his opinion, sufficient to convince lookers-on, that he was on good terms with her.

Before the first dance was over, Harry Howard entered the room with John Power, who, observing Thorold dancing with Miss Maitland, said—

“Confound it ! Harry, there is your pet, standing up with that insufferable coxcomb Thorold ; but there is one comfort, she don’t seem in a very talkative humour to-night, and anybody but the fool himself, may see his company is anything but agreeable. That’s old

Selwyn's doing, I'll warrant, who thinks him a good match."

"I rather think, John, I shall engage Mr. Thorold in a very different kind of match, before he is many hours older."

"No, no, Harry, don't be getting into any more scrapes now."

"Well, John, but that puppy has actually been up to the governor, and told him Miss Maitland is a regular Bath flirt, and old Selwyn a Dutchman—confound his impudence!"

"Has he, by Jove! but your governor, as you call him, has too much good sense to be gammoned by such an ass as Thorold; so keep your temper, and treat him with the contempt he deserves."

Harry worked his way through the crowd, until he reached his intended, who, not perceiving his approach, started at his voice, as he said in a low tone—

"I shall wait by your side, until you have finished your dance with that puppy!"

Thorold saw the colour mount to her brow at

Harry's address, and did not by any means fancy the look bestowed on himself by his quondam friend, who remained close behind them until the quadrille was over, and ere Mr. Thorold had completed his bow ceremonial, Harry marched off with his partner. Mary Maitland noticing Harry's angry looks, feared he was offended at her accepting Mr. Thorold as a partner, and explained how she had been induced by Mr. Selwyn to dance with him.

"No, my dear girl," said Harry, "I am not offended with you, but justly indignant with him for endeavouring to prejudice my father against you;" and he then told her the conversation they had that evening before leaving home.

"To prevent further annoyance, I think," added Harry, "I should now make a formal proposal to your mother, or she may think me acting dishonourably, or doubtfully, at least; and Mr. Selwyn has, I believe, a partiality for Thorold, which may occasion unpleasantries, if my real sentiments are not openly expressed,

it being now nearly a month since you accepted that worthless fellow Harry."

"Really!" she said, "it does not appear more than a week since, time has passed so happily—in truth, I never can be happier than now, and were I to consult my own feelings, would willingly remain as we are; but, as you observe, mamma perhaps may take offence, so you must act as you think best."

"Then I will write to her to-morrow, for a refusal may be more palatable on paper than from word of mouth; but I shall be terribly nervous on opening her letter."

"Oh, don't let that agitate you; I know full well mamma's partiality for you, and she will never stand in the way of my happiness; yet I shall dread that morning, and the effect your letter must produce on my poor mother."

"Well, my dearest Mary, you can console her with the assurance that we do not wish to leave her for some time yet, and being such near neighbours, we shall, even after marriage, be always together. Had you accepted any other

of your suitors, who live in distant counties, the case must have been very different ; so that is something in Harry's favour, if there is nothing else."

"I never should have accepted any one but yourself," she replied. "The very idea of marrying another never entered my head. This I may tell you now, so do not imagine such a thing would have happened."

"Thank you, my own dear child, for that confession. Harry's great failing has been jealousy, arising from excess of love ; but I trust you will never have cause to repent your choice—nor do I believe it possible any human being could love you with the intense affection I feel, although I do not always show it. You know my dislike of parade of any kind ; and parading one's love before the world is rebellion against every pure thought of the heart."

"In expressing yourself thus, dear Harry, you explain my own feelings also, which I fear you have never rightly understood until now."

"Well, to confess the truth, your reserve

towards me has often occasioned me more misery than you may think it possible a man could feel, and I really believed you loved another ; but that is all past, and Harry is as happy as possible ; so now we must return to the ball-room, or Mr. Selwyn will think I am going to run away with you, which I don't intend doing, as long as I can obtain your hand by fair means."

"Nor even if you could not—runaway matches always turn out unhappily ; nor do I believe you would ever after respect me if I consented to such a thing, which, dear Harry, much as I love you, I could never do."

"You are quite right, my dear Mary ; but one promise you must make me, never be persuaded by father, mother, or friend, to marry another till I prove unworthy."

"That I faithfully promise, and may add further, that I am sure, even were our engagement broken off, I never could marry another."

The second day after this conversation between the lovers, Mrs. Selwyn received Harry's over-

tures for her daughter's hand, and on reading the letter, burst into tears at the thought of losing her only child. Mr. Selwyn also appeared much affected, and Mary was quite overcome in witnessing her mother's distress, regretting for a moment the letter had arrived.

"My dearest child," sobbed the fond mother, "why must you leave me? Are you not happy at home? Your father and I do all we can to make you so."

"Yes, dearest mamma, I know your love and affection, and am quite happy with you; but Harry Howard has been attached to me for a long time, and fearing he might lose me, has confessed his love; he does not, however, wish me to leave you yet, and when I do, we shall live so near each other, we may meet daily, and is not that a great comfort, dearest mamma?"

"Yes, my child, there is great consolation in that, and I believe Mr. Howard to be an excellent, high-principled young man; but even a husband's cannot equal a mother's love, and it will be a bitter trial, indeed, when you leave us."

"Pray, dearest mamma, do not make yourself so miserable ; I will never marry at all, if it makes you so unhappy. I will never leave you."

"No, my dear Mary, such a sacrifice I cannot expect from you, and do not ask it ; but this has come rather suddenly upon me, although foreseeing it must happen some day ; and I am so out of spirits, I cannot answer Mr. Howard's letter to-day, but to-morrow I will send the reply you wish."

"Thank you, my own dear mother," throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her. "I never will do anything to forfeit your affection, even for Harry Howard."

Although complying with her daughter's wishes, and having no reasonable objection to Harry Howard, Mrs. Selwyn, with a mother's forethought, and exercising a wise discretion, did not desire her engagement to him to be made public until arrangements had been settled for their marriage ; knowing, also, the antipathy of men in general to marry a girl who had been

previously engaged to another, and foreseeing many obstacles which might arise to delay or prevent her union with Harry. Aware, nevertheless, of her daughter's long attachment, she wrote a very favourable reply to his proposal, on the receipt of which he immediately set off to make his acknowledgments in person to Mrs. Selwyn, by whom he was kindly received, and afterwards permitted the enjoyment of a long interview with his beloved Mary. Nothing was now wanting to complete their happiness but Mr. Howard's consent, which Harry obtained by claiming his promise.

"Well, Harry," said Mr. Howard, "my promise was conditional, you know, that your choice should be a second Florence Annaly."

"Yes, my dear father, and so she is in every respect, even to the colour of her eyes and hair ; but you shall judge for yourself—come and see her."

"That won't do, Harry ; she may be all smiles and blushes, and got up for the occasion ; but how am I to know her temper and dispo-

sition?—Those are points we look to in a horse or dog—much more should we regard them in a woman.”

“Well, my dear father, I have tried her as hard for the last two years on that point as any girl could be tried, with rough usage sometimes. She is one of the sweetest and most affectionate dispositions in the world, or she never would have remained true to me as she has been, when so many other men, and rich ones, too, have endeavoured to take her from me.”

“Are you quite sure of that, Master Harry, or is it only a trick to entrap you?”

“Not much of a trick, I should think, when your son was within an ace of fighting a couple of duels about it, and seeing is believing, sometimes; but ask your favourite, Jack Power, about her; he is not a likely fellow to be hoodwinked.”

“Well, Harry, I don’t doubt either you or her; and if you really are in love with her, it can’t be helped now; but you cannot marry yet.”

“That, my dear father, I don’t care about, nor she either.”

“Don’t she, by Jove, Harry? — Then she must be something out of the common run of women. That’s a copy of her countenance, I suspect, for I never knew one yet who did not long to have a husband.”

“Then, father, I have found her at last ; she does not wish to be married at all, but suggests we should live as brother and sister.”

“By Jupiter Ammon, Harry ! then she beats Florence Annaly out of the field. You shall have her, my boy, or I shall fall in love with her myself. But stop a bit, as it is likely to be a bargain, is she of good shape and make, and a fair height, for I hate your Dutch-built ones ?”

“Well, father, she will answer your description, I believe ; sound, goes well, beautiful in shape and make, and stands about fifteen two and a half—that is above the common standard of women ; moreover, she is young, fresh, and cheerful, and has never owned another master ;

in other words, has never loved any other man than Harry."

"That will do, my boy; but mind one thing, you cannot take a wife on trial, so if she turns out vicious or unsound, you must keep her; but by your own account, she must be more like an angel than a woman."

"And if you don't think the same when you know her as well as I do, you may horsewhip me for a fool."

"Very well, Harry, I'll take you at your word; but recollect, I had set my heart on your marrying Charlotte Stewart."

Harry was silent for a minute, then gravely said—

"My dear father, I will remain single, if you desire it, and, as far as Charlotte is concerned, must do so for life; for although I do indeed respect her most highly, and would do anything in my power to serve and please you, yet you yourself would despise me in your heart, were I mean and contemptible enough to marry any woman for her money alone, or, worse than

that, swear at the altar to love one towards whom I could feel no affection."

"Well, Harry, I did wish so once, but you are my true son and no counterfeit, so get your horse, and let us gallop down this dose of love."

CHAPTER XI.

THE month of May had now arrived, and Mr. Selwyn's family returned to Elm Grove for the summer, when the lovers, in the retirement of country life, enjoyed almost uninterrupted happiness, although Mrs. Selwyn still exercised a certain restraint upon her daughter, by not allowing her to ride with Harry unless accompanied by her husband. To this no objection could be raised on his part, since in other respects both Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn behaved in the most friendly manner, although the latter could not even then divest herself of the idea that Harry's affection for her daughter was of a very luke-

warm character ; and in truth, to lookers-on, both appeared more like brother and sister, than affianced lovers. Mrs. Selwyn took an opportunity, when they were alone, of remarking this to her daughter.

“There is, my dear Mary, none of that warmth or tenderness of feeling towards you on Harry’s part which one would expect in the situation you stand to each other ; on the contrary, there always appears more solicitude to please with you ; and depend upon it,” she added, “if you do not experience warmth of affection before marriage, what can you expect afterwards ?”

Such speeches as these were often addressed to Mary by her mother, to which she could only reply that she felt perfectly satisfied of Harry’s depth of love, although outwardly he did not show it ; but still the effect produced was a restraint and coldness of manner towards him sometimes which occasioned several unpleasant scenes between them. There was also another painful source of annoyance to Miss Maitland,

by the reflections cast on Harry's father, who had not yet called at Elm Grove, or taken any notice of his son's engagement.

Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn were continually harping on Mr. Howard's rudeness or indifference in this respect, without being aware that independently of Mr. Howard's eccentric and very retired habits of life, there were other causes which deterred him from wishing to make Mr. Selwyn's acquaintance. Thorold endeavoured, by every possible means to prejudice him against Mr. Selwyn; and even his own son George, who had been long known to Mr. Howard, senior, and had frequently dined at his house, had striven hard to set him against his own father.

Some months had now elapsed, and no overtures having been made by Mr. Howard relative to his son's engagement with Miss Maitland, her mother became seriously offended by this apparently intended slight on the whole family, and thus gave vent to her feelings—

“It is now, Mary, five months since I received

Mr. Harry Howard's proposals, and not the slightest notice has been taken of you by any of his family; and I really am perfectly astonished at the coolness with which you view such extraordinary neglect; at least, I did not suppose you deficient in proper pride, or insensible to that respect and attention which is your due. It preys upon my mind continually, when I look round and see the respect and kindness paid to others, who are not half so much entitled to it as you are, and I must own, I feel hurt and indignant at the manner in which you are treated, and deeply regret your entering a family who think so little of you. Had your father lived, you would have moved in a rank of life far above what you do now, and in point of family, you can compete with any in the kingdom. Even Mr. Spalding, with his good fortune and high pretensions, sought the first opportunity of introducing his mother and sister to your father, before he made a proposal for your hand. Such neglect, therefore, on Mr. Howard's part, is unpardonable and insulting to us all, and I shall be

glad for you to leave home for a time until some advances are made on his side, or your engagement is at an end ; for, to speak candidly, my dear Mary, I have a *presentiment* that your marriage with Harry Howard will never take place."

Poor Mary was quite overcome by this harsh speech of her mother's, and burst into tears.

" Oh, mamma !" she exclaimed, " although I do feel pained at Mr. Howard's neglect of us, yet every one knows he is a very eccentric though very kind-hearted man, and that he never visits any one ; but I cannot for a moment doubt Harry's attachment to me, although he never reveals his love and true feelings to any one but myself."

The perpetual dropping of water will wear away a stone ; and Mrs. Selwyn's continual remarks on Harry's apparent lukewarmness (as she termed it) and his father's indifference, could not fail of producing some effect on her daughter, and with a girl of less fervent and constant feelings, must have led to a final estrangement.

Fortunately for her defence of her lover, his character was unimpeachable; there was not one single point on which he could be assailed by the breath of slander, even. Encased in an armour of lofty and religious principles, he threw aside with contempt all the insidious advances made to allure him into the paths of vice or dissipation. He kept aloof from the young men of his acquaintance, when endeavouring to entice him into excesses of any kind, and with the conscious dignity of a virtuous mind, stood fearlessly alone. Jealous of the preference shown to him by Miss Maitland, Thorold and others used all their efforts to beguile him into their haunts, that they might have some opportunity of disparaging his character; persuasion, ridicule, and other acts were used in vain; Harry treated them with scorn.

Mary Maitland heard from many quarters, with the most pleasurable emotions, the high character of her intended husband, and every day impressed her more with his intrinsic worth. Still her mother's incessant worrying rendered

her very unhappy, and her only enjoyment was in his society ; even that she sometimes thought could scarcely compensate for the constant irritation and annoyance to which she was exposed by her mother's and Mr. Selwyn's observations.

She had been unusually excited one morning by their remarks, when Harry called at Elm Grove, and in her mother's presence she treated him with such marked indifference, that after he left, Mrs. Selwyn even noticed her daughter's conduct, as being too distant, although occasioned by what she herself had said.

Harry, ignorant of any cause, felt justly offended, and had absented himself for several days, when by chance they met near the Lodge gates. Harry offered to escort her back to the house, and when midway, where they could not be overheard, she alluded to his absence for so many days.

"Mary," he said, firmly, "that absence on my part has been intentional ; and had we not met now by accident, would have been pro-

longed—but now hear me, I hate subterfuge or evasion. I love you frankly, honestly, and faithfully, but you often receive me with so much coolness and indifference, that my visits are either too frequent or not welcome. In short, it is very obvious you wish our engagement ended.”

“Oh, Harry,” she replied, “indeed, indeed you mistake me; I have been sometimes out of spirits when you have called, and cannot rouse myself to appear cheerful.”

“Mary,” he said, emphatically, “you cannot deceive me—there is a cause for your distant behaviour to me, and that cause I have a right to know, or here we part for ever; there must be confidence, *entire* confidence between us, or we had better remain as we were before.”

Still no response followed.

Harry’s suspicions seemed confirmed, when struggling with his emotions, he added, in a faltering voice,—

“Here then, Mary, I release you from your engagement, although I must ever love you

still. *I* could never marry another—but may *you* find one who will love you half as well as your poor Harry. Come, give me your hand once more (extending his), and now God bless you. Farewell.”

Sobs prevented Mary’s utterance, but firmly grasping his hand in hers, she wept convulsively ; when Harry, pressing her to his heart, begged her to compose herself, and confess her real feelings.

“Tell me all, my dearest child ; every thought of your heart—Harry will never deceive or betray you.”

“Oh, Harry,” she said, raising her streaming eyes to his, “do not doubt my love for you—it is indeed my sole existence—without you life would be a perfect blank ; but you shall now know, although I did not wish to mention it, the cause of my reserve sometimes to you.”

She then told him how wretched she was made by her mother’s unkind speeches about his apparent indifference, and the annoyance she felt at his father’s neglect in never having yet called upon her ; but she said,—

“I know you have many other engagements to prevent your being here as often as I could desire, and believe me, I have never questioned the depth of your affection; although mamma will insist the love is all on my side. Knowing you so well, dear Harry, her remarks on that point I do not in the least regard, but I am powerless to defend your father’s conduct, which does certainly appear very strange.”

“Yes, my dear Mary, it may appear strange, but you must have heard that he is a very strange character altogether; his prejudices are strong, and I will tell you candidly, he has taken a dislike to Mr. Selwyn, which his son George has done all he can to confirm, so that I shall have difficulty in removing them. But for yourself, he will receive you as his own daughter, whenever you may become Harry’s wife. On that point I am well assured; although, from my representations, backed by your own wishes, he does not contemplate our union taking place for some time.”

Mary was satisfied with this explanation,

although she well knew it would be anything but satisfactory to her mother or Mr. Selwyn ; the latter, with his business-like ideas and love of money, considering an engagement as a bargain or contract in which £ s. d. should occupy the most prominent place. But this idea was equally repugnant to Harry and his father, who looked upon marriage in a very different light, although fully aware that, at the proper time, due consideration should be paid to these matters. The apparent haste in bringing things to a conclusion, produced an unpleasant effect upon Harry, who felt assured Mrs. Selwyn would have preferred a more wealthy suitor for her daughter, although he was perfectly convinced Mary loved him without any sordid views, and with a love as pure and as unselfish as his own.

The day after their last interview, Mr. Selwyn received an invitation from his eldest brother in Berkshire (who had succeeded to the family estates, and lived in great style at Hagley Hall), to spend a few weeks with them, and accompany them to the Ascot Races, which was

immediately accepted ; Mrs. Selwyn being glad of the opportunity of varying the scene for her daughter, and removing her for a time from the proximity of the Howards.

Parents claim the privilege of committing all kinds of inconsistencies toward their children, for which *they* are held responsible, not themselves, although, from their better knowledge and long experience of the world, the parents are the culpable parties.

From their own experience, they must know that young persons, if thrown much together, may, and will, in all probability, if good-looking and agreeable, form an attachment for each other ; and yet mothers will invite young men to their houses, affording them every opportunity of rendering themselves acceptable to their daughters, and then wonder after all that they should presume to fall in love with them ; and this inconsistency of conduct can only be accounted for in one way ; that parents judge of their own feelings as they *are*, not as they *were*. Prevention is far better than cure, particularly

in love cases ; and if mammas would exercise a little sound discretion in preventing an intimacy springing up between their daughters and young men of objectionable character or inadequate pretensions, they would save themselves a deal of trouble, and their children a vast amount of misery.

Mrs. Selwyn, although fully aware of Mr. Howard's eccentricity of character, and of his son's entire dependence on his father during his life — knowing also that he was intended for some profession, and therefore not likely to be married immediately, yet invited Harry Howard constantly to her house, without, as it would appear, thinking him susceptible of any *penchant* for her daughter ; and after accepting him as a suitor, now wished the whole affair at an end, because the preliminaries to their marriage were not at once entered into.

It is certain that Mrs. Selwyn entertained a very high opinion of Harry individually, and equally so, that until within a week of his proposal, she never would believe he had any serious

intentions towards her daughter, notwithstanding Miss Dundonald's remarks, and Mary's own confession ; and his apparent coolness now confirmed her in the pre-conceived idea, that there was a great want of the true devotion of an ardent lover ; it cannot therefore be considered as anything extraordinary, that with these feelings, and her affectionate solicitude for her child's future happiness, she should endeavour to persuade her from entering a family by whom, apparently, she would not be most fully appreciated.

The invitation to Hagley Hall was accordingly accepted, and the day after their arrival there was a large dinner-party, consisting of their more aristocratic neighbours, among whom, one of the most gentlemanly in appearance and manners, although not strikingly handsome in person, was Sir William Beaumont, a young baronet of about five-and-twenty, who, by his father's decease, had lately succeeded to the title and extensive estates.

After having distinguished himself at the

University, he had just returned from a continental tour, and was now living with his mother, to whom he was most devotedly attached, at their family seat, Braybrook Park.

Lady Beaumont was a person of very superior mind—clever and well-informed, and although she had in early life shone rather conspicuously in fashionable circles, yet she had latterly devoted the greater part of her time to literary pursuits, and the improvement and strengthening of her son's mind; in whom, being an only child, all her hopes and affections were centred. From a thorough knowledge of the world, she had cautioned him against forming any hasty matrimonial alliance, fearing, from his position and large fortune, he might become the dupe of designing girls or their mothers.

Being of a cautious and rather reserved disposition himself, his mother's advice was almost unnecessary, particularly after a little love affair with his tutor's daughter at the early age of nineteen.

On the morning of the dinner-party at Hag-

ley Hall, Lady Beaumont and her son were seated at the breakfast-table, when the latter, who had been glancing at a morning paper, suddenly exclaimed,—

“My dear mother, who do you think is married?”

“Really, William, I know so many young ladies on the matrimonial list, that it is impossible for me to guess who may be the fortunate fair one on this occasion.”

“Well, then, it is no other than my tutor’s daughter, Miss Turner.”

“Ah, William, you had a narrow escape there, young and inexperienced as you were; but I trust you have grown wiser now.”

“Yes, my dear mother, but for your good advice, I certainly should have been caught in the trap laid by this pretty though artful girl; and now she has gone off with an Italian singer.”

“I am sorry to hear it, my dear William; although I cannot but rejoice that she will never now become the Mistress of Braybrook.”

"No fear of that for some years past—but *à propos* of this evening's entertainment at Hagley Hall, they are such stiff and formal affairs, I wish we had not accepted the invitation; but we shall meet some of our distant neighbours there. I dare say Miss Clayfield also, who is resolved on becoming Lady Beaumont—so of course we must go, if only for the pleasure of meeting her."

"She does set most industriously to work," said Lady Beaumont, "to insinuate herself into my good opinion; but it will not do with me, although it may succeed with you."

"No, my dear mother, there is not the most remote prospect of my falling in love with her, being just the reverse of the sort of character I should select as a wife; besides which, the romance of boyhood is past, and I begin to think I shall settle down into a bachelor life, as there is little chance of my finding a partner who would suit my taste."

"Don't make too sure of that, William; I only hope you will find some amiable, unaffected

girl, deserving your affection ; and whenever that is the case, I shall be glad to see you married."

The large drawing-room at Hagley Hall was occupied by several distinguished guests before Lady Beaumont was announced, leaning on her son's arm ; and after the usual salutations and greetings had passed with their host and hostess, Lady Beaumont took a seat near Mrs. Selwyn.

Soon after, Sir John and Lady Clayfield made their *entrée*, followed by their eldest daughter Harriet, a tall and very handsome though bold-looking girl, dressed in the extreme of fashion.

"Ah, my dear Lady Beaumont !" exclaimed the latter, "I am rejoiced to see you !" seizing her almost reluctant hand ; "it seems an age since we met."

"Not a very great age, my dear, since last Friday week."

"Well, perhaps not so very long ; but is Sir William with you this evening ?" to which an

affirmative being given, Miss Harriet tripped off in search of him.

After she had left, Lady Beaumont's attention was directed across the room to Miss Maitland, with whose sweetness of expression and lady-like, quiet appearance she was much taken ; and turning to Mrs. Selwyn, she inquired her name.

"That is my niece, or, rather, niece-in-law, Miss Maitland, who is on a visit here with her mother and Mr. George Selwyn."

"Then she is not Mr. George Selwyn's daughter?"

"Oh, no! her father was of a very old Scotch family, and nearly related to the Duke of ——."

"Indeed! she appears a very nice, unaffected young person," remarked Lady Beaumont, "and very pretty also. Will you introduce me to her, Mrs. Selwyn, after dinner, or perhaps before, if you have an opportunity?"

"With much pleasure, for she is a very sweet

girl, and a great favourite of mine, without any of the forward manners so prevalent in the present day."

In the meantime, Harriet Clayfield had attached herself to Sir William Beaumont, who, on dinner being announced, was, perforce, obliged to offer her his arm to the dining-room, which she had been intent on obtaining.

Opposite to them sat young Clayfield (who had just obtained a commission in the Life Guards) and Miss Maitland. The young aspirant for military renown was a dandy of the first water; and looking upon all girls as flirts at heart, if not in appearance, was favouring Miss Maitland with a great deal of nonsensical trash in the way of conversation, to which, far from being pleased with it, she scarcely deigned a reply.

The young Life Guardsman [being foiled in rendering himself agreeable, set her down at once as some shy country girl, who had never seen anything of society or the world beyond her own country village; and thinking to ex-

pose her ignorance, asked if she had ever been out of England.

"Yes," she replied, quietly; "I travelled for two years on the Continent."

"'Pon honour, you don't say so! and what country did you like best?"

"Italy," she said, "I preferred; although for romantic scenery, Switzerland is superior."

"Ah—yes; Italy is a fine climate. Those fellows sing well, but they can't fight a bit, except in the dark, with their stiletos. I don't like such savages."

"Have you ever been in Italy?" inquired Miss Maitland.

"Why, no, not exactly," replied the crest-fallen young soldier.

"Then I think when you go there you will not find the Italians quite such savages as you suppose; at least, my acquaintance with some Italian families has led me to think very highly of them."

Cornet Clayfield was not a little nettled at being taken up so short by this *country* young

lady, and more annoyed as, at this juncture, Sir William Beaumont, hearing his remarks about the Italians (for whom he also entertained a great regard) and Miss Maitland's replies, darted a contemptuous look at him across the table, the meaning of which was not doubtful. After the ladies had retired, Sir William remarked—

“I say, Clayfield, who was that young lady you were condescending to enlighten on the manners and customs of the Italians? — I think you had the worst of that argument, eh?”

“Why, 'pon my life, I don't know exactly; she's a pretty-looking girl, but confounded slow.”

“I beg your pardon, Sir William, for interrupting you,” observed Mr. Selwyn, “but that young lady is my niece.”

“The deuce she is!” exclaimed Clayfield, in amazement; “then I beg ten thousand pardons for my rudeness in speaking of her as I did.”

“Oh, there’s no offence given ; she is, perhaps, rather reserved, which you may call slow.”

“One thing I’ll engage,” put in Sir William, “slow as she may be, she is much too quick for you, Clayfield.”

After a very protracted sitting, the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, where Sir William found his mother in earnest conversation with Miss Maitland.

“Well, my dear mother,” he said, “I thought we should never leave the dining-room ; for with Lord Beauclerc on politics, Sir Gilbert Fairacre on agricultural statistics, and Mr. Le Marchant on the colonies, our discussions appeared likely to prove interminable.”

“You are very late, certainly, William ; but now let me introduce you to Miss Maitland, who knows our friend the Marquise Lascaris, of Pisa, and has just received a letter from her. Here, we can make room for you on the sofa,” said Lady Beaumont, “unless you wish to direct your attentions elsewhere.”

“Oh, no ; I shall be delighted, indeed, to hear news of my kind friends in Italy.”

Thus seated, the trio remained for some time mutually pleased with each other, talking of mutual friends, rendering them almost friends also, although upon so short an acquaintance.

Music being introduced, Miss Maitland was asked to sing, Sir William petitioning for an Italian song, to remind him of dear, sunny Italy.

“My singing is not worth listening to,” she replied ; “but I will comply with your request to the best of my ability.”

After the desired song, Miss Maitland then resigned her seat at the piano, when Lady Beaumont came up to her and said, being about to leave—

“You will be at Ascot, I suppose, to-morrow ?”

“Oh, yes ; I believe we are all going.”

The carriages were now ordered, and the party dispersed.

CHAPTER XII.

ON their return to Braybrook that night, Lady Beaumont and her son could talk of no one else but Miss Maitland, and it would be difficult to say with which of the two she had become the greatest favourite.

“Why, my dear mother,” remarked her son, “you are positively in love with Miss Maitland at first sight; well, I am far more prudent than yourself, though she is certainly a very charming, most unaffected, and prepossessing girl.”

“I must confess,” added Lady Beaumont, “that I have, indeed, taken a great fancy to her

already ; and my impression is, from the sentiments she expresses, so much in unison with my own, that she will improve on further acquaintance ; and as her party will be at Ascot Races to-morrow, we shall have an opportunity, perhaps, of seeing her again."

It was the fashion in those days for the company at Ascot to promenade up and down the course, during the intervals between each race, before the Grand Stand, where they had a full view of his Majesty George the Fourth and the royal party, whose presence was ever most loudly greeted by his loyal subjects. There was a great display of female beauty and fashion on this occasion ; and however it may be the fashion to abuse the aristocracy in these latter days, there can be no doubt that the higher ranks exhibit an unstudied dignity of deportment, suavity of manners, and gracefulness of carriage almost peculiar, because indigenous to their own class. As Sir William Beaumont paced up and down the course, his eye rested on many beautiful features and graceful figures,

from several of whom he received a bow or smile of recognition ; but still he sauntered on, after a short interchange of greeting with those of his acquaintance, in search of another object. At the end of the promenade he was accosted by the young Life Guardsman, Clayfield.

“ Ah, Beaumont ! how do ? Splendid lot of girls—heads well up—fine steppers, eh ? ”

“ I quite agree with you, Clayfield, there are some beautiful women on the course to-day.”

“ Yaus ; and there’s that Miss Iceland you were talking Italian with last night. Hang it, Beaumont ! you seemed uncommonly taken with that girl ; but she don’t suit my fancy—too much of the buckram order. But there she is again, with that old, stiff Selwyn coming up, so I’m off.”

Sir William approached the party, and having made his bow, continued walking by Miss Maitland’s side, until the bell rang for clearing the course, when he escorted her to the carriage, and being invited by Mrs. Selwyn to a vacant seat and refreshments, availed himself of the

offer, and remained with them until the course was clear again. To Miss Maitland's inquiries if Lady Beaumont was there, he replied in the affirmative, and added, that as his mother seldom left the carriage, he was commissioned by her to say, she would be much pleased to see Mrs. Selwyn and Miss Maitland, if they would allow him to conduct them to her.

"I am too much fatigued," said Mrs. Selwyn, "to walk any more; but Mr. Selwyn and my daughter will, I am sure, be happy to accompany you to Lady Beaumont."

Just as they reached that lady's carriage and were standing by the door, an old friend of Mr. Selwyn's, whom he had not seen for many years, tapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming—

"Ah, Selwyn, we have not met for an age! let us have a short turn together, for I want a little conversation with you."

Apologizing to Lady Beaumont, he was about to withdraw, when she said—

"There is a seat in the carriage for Miss

Maitland if she will accept it, whilst you are talking with your friend."

"I am much obliged to your Ladyship," said Selwyn, "and will return in a short time for my daughter."

Lady Beaumont was much pleased with this arrangement, and Mary had been sitting in very agreeable conversation with her and Sir William for nearly an hour, when, glancing at her watch, she suddenly exclaimed—

"What can have become of Mr. Selwyn?—he has certainly forgotten me, and it is nearly four o'clock, when mamma ordered the horses to return home."

"I can scarcely imagine," said Sir William with a smile, "that Miss Maitland could be so quickly forgotten by any one who takes an interest in her; but perhaps Mr. Selwyn has missed our carriage."

Mary blushed slightly at the compliment, and added—

"Mr. Selwyn is so short-sighted, that I fear he will scarcely find me again, and mamma will

be really alarmed at my absence ! What can I do ?”

Lady Beaumont, sympathizing with her evident distress, in this awkward position, offered to send her son in search of Mr. Selwyn, or that he should escort her back to their carriage.

“Thank you, Lady Beaumont, I had better return at once, for I know mamma will be uneasy about me ;—but I am really sorry to give Sir William so much trouble, and how to avoid it I do not know.”

“Pray don’t distress yourself on my account,” gaily responded Sir William ; “I shall be proud to be your knight-errant on this occasion.”

Wishing Lady Beaumont good-bye, she was handed from the carriage by her son, and they had advanced side by side, half-way up the course, when the bell again ringing for clearing it, she was nearly knocked down by a party rushing across them.

“Really,” said Sir William, “you must not stand on ceremony now, Miss Maitland ; pray accept my arm at once, or you will be borne

away by the crowd ; and I fear already you are hurt by those rude people."

"No," she said, "I feel rather frightened—but let us hasten on."

"You tremble and look so pale, that I am sure you are hurt," persisted Sir William, in the softest tone of voice, really alarmed by her pallid looks. "Here is Lady Beauclerc's carriage ; pray take a seat in that for a few minutes."

"Oh no," she said, "let us find mamma ; I shall soon be myself again."

Passing his companion's arm firmly within his own, Sir William Beaumont battled with the crowd until he had placed her under her mother's care, when she nearly fainted away. Having briefly explained to Mrs. Selwyn what had occurred, and suggesting a glass of wine as the best restorative ; he waited until she was quite recovered, and then politely took his leave, offering his hand to Miss Maitland, which she took with many thanks for his kind escort and assistance.

Lady Beaumont was greatly distressed on hearing these details from her son.

“How awkward, William, you must have been, to allow the poor girl to be hurt in this manner by these rude people.”

“Indeed, my dear mother, it was not my fault ; for she refused my arm at first, or this would not have happened.”

“Then, William, I think the more highly of her for so doing—she has an innate sense of propriety and decorum, which cannot be sufficiently admired.”

“Well, she is reserved enough sometimes, although at others very cheerful and agreeable, particularly with you, my dear mother, and her own sex ; but in gentlemen’s society she is rather cold and formal.”

“So much the better—just what I approve.”

The next morning Sir William rode over early to Hagley Hall to enquire after Miss Maitland, and with an invitation from his mother to Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn and their visitors to dine at Braybrook that day week, which was accepted ; and

after having passed a very agreeable hour with the ladies, during which his address was chiefly directed to Miss Maitland, he left with many expressions of pleasure that she had experienced no ill effects from his awkward pilotage of the previous day.

When he was gone, their hostess remarked, "Really, Mary, Sir William seems to pay you more attention than he usually does to young ladies; he is so very quiet and particular, that they set him down already as an old bachelor."

"Oh, this is merely common politeness," she replied gravely, "in asking how I felt, after having been nearly knocked down yesterday."

"Well, we shall see, my dear," replied Mrs. Selwyn, senr.; and the subject dropped, on the gentlemen entering the room at that moment, equipped for a ride.

On the following day Lady Beaumont called at Hagley, and invited Mrs. Selwyn and her daughter to drive over the following morning to see Braybrook and lunch with her, which was accepted. On this occasion, Sir William and

his mother escorted their visitors through the gardens and walks, which were beautifully laid out, and kept in the highest order; the former attaching himself to Miss Maitland, with whom he soon rambled away to point out different views, leaving their more staid companions some distance behind; Sir William endeavouring to elicit her opinions on various subjects, led to these topics, from the scenery around them, the pleasures of a country life, domestic happiness, and last, though not least, religion, as the basis of every solid enjoyment in life. On all these points, his fair companion's sentiments accorded with his own.

"But I hear," he added, "you often attend the balls in Bath, Miss Maitland."

"Yes," she said, "I do occasionally, when expecting to see friends whom I may not perhaps meet elsewhere."

"Then you don't attend them constantly, as many young ladies do, from a thirst after pleasure only."

"Certainly not, although, when there, I enjoy

both dancing and the music. You don't think I should like to sit still all the evening, do you?"

"No, I suppose not; but some young ladies are never quite happy, except when at balls and parties, to which their whole thoughts are given, and, I fear, to little besides."

"That is not my case, Sir William," said Mary, in an offended tone. "I should not care if I was never present at another;—but we must join our party (looking back), which I see some distance behind."

"I hope you are not offended at my remarks, which, believe me, were not intended to apply to yourself."

"Oh no," she said, "I could not, of course, take them as personal, being almost a perfect stranger to you."

"Having had the honour now of making your acquaintance, I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you often."

"That is scarcely probable, as we leave Hagley Hall the week after next."

"Do you indeed, so soon?"

“ Yes, our fortnight expires,—we come to a day, and we leave to a day ;—is not that very regular ?”

“ Yes, certainly,—but it is very formal notwithstanding ; too much so, I think.”

“ You must say no more on that subject—we are now near our party,” she said gaily, “ who will think I have been playing the truant in deserting them.”

During the remainder of their survey of the grounds, Miss Maitland did not afford Sir William another opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* conversation, at which he exhibited a little pardonable impatience ; and Lady Beaumont observing and surmising the cause, said—

“ You have not shown Miss Maitland the north view yet, William, which I think the prettiest of all. You young people can climb the hill-side, while we more sober ones walk down to the lake.”

“ I fear, Lady Beaumont, I shall be unequal to much more exertion to-day, having a slight pain in my side, so I shall beg to join your sober party.”

“Oh, certainly, my dear, if you prefer it ; but if you are not well, had you not better return with William to the house, and take a glass of wine?—or, if Mrs. Selwyn likes, we can all go back at once.”

“Oh no,” said Mary, “I am quite equal to a slow ramble, and enjoy being out, so pray do not think of returning on my account,”

After partaking of a sumptuous luncheon, the Selwyns left Braybrook, much gratified with their reception, and delighted with the beauty of the place.

On their departure, Lady Beaumont had a long conversation with her son about the Selwyns and Miss Maitland.

“They appear to live in great style,” she remarked, “travelling with their four-in-hand, but my pet seems devoid of all pride and affectation—in short, William, I am quite charmed with her, and feel assured she will make an excellent wife to any man, rich or poor, who may be fortunate enough to obtain her hand.”

“So think I, my dear mother ; but she is

not to be had merely for the asking, as so many girls are."

"What! have you tried her already, William?"

"No; I merely suggested a hope that we might be friends for the future, to which she replied, that true friends were not often met with; with a few other remarks, which induce me to think she will be very particular in her selection of a husband."

"That is no more than I expected," replied Lady Beaumont; "but I hope we shall see more of her now the ice is broken, and I sincerely hope she may not prove insensible to your many good qualities on more intimate acquaintance."

"They leave next week for London, so this will not allow of many more meetings," replied Sir William.

"Then," said Lady Beaumont, "I will ask Mrs. Selwyn to spend a few days at Braybrook, as it lies in her road to town."

There were few secrets between mother and

son; and Sir William, having been from childhood of delicate constitution, requiring great care, Lady Beaumont was very desirous of seeing him well married, to a quiet, lady-like person, of good family and connections, and above all, of sweet disposition and domestic ideas, who would be contented and happy in a country life. In Miss Maitland she fondly hoped all those qualities of person and mind were combined, and she appeared just the person she would have selected for his wife.

Sir William made a similar confession to his mother, declaring, that although not positively in love at first sight, that he was instantly attracted by her peculiar sweetness of expression, and gentleness of manners.

“Well, William, I am glad to find our opinions so exactly coincide, and I shall use my best endeavours to persuade Mrs. Selwyn to pay us a visit when she leaves Hagley.”

A select party were invited to meet the Selwyns on the day fixed for their dining at Braybrook; but Sir William, as host on this occa-

sion, had scarcely an opportunity of speaking to Miss Maitland, until the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room after dinner, when he endeavoured to make amends, and approaching her, said, in a low tone, "The part of host, which has devolved upon me this evening, is sometimes far from an agreeable one, and has restricted me from enjoying your society, or even speaking to you until now."

"Indeed," she replied, with a sweet smile, "no apology is necessary to me, surrounded as you are by so many distinguished guests."

"None more distinguished, Miss Maitland, than yourself, for those qualities of mind and manners which I value far beyond all titles."

"Really, Sir William, you are very complimentary; but I do not like flattery."

"It was not my intention to flatter, but speak the truth," he rejoined; "and now let me ask, if you feel perfectly recovered from the effects of my awkward protection of you on the Race-course."

"I am quite well now, thank you; but no

blame could possibly be attached to you for that misadventure."

Music being now introduced, she was requested to favour him with an Italian song.

"Pray don't ask me to sing to-night; I am always so nervous before strangers."

"Very well," he replied; "but to punish you for my disappointment, I shall sit down and talk nonsense to you instead, and make fine speeches."

Mary being in high spirits that day, from a letter she had received from her dear Harry, appeared more than usually cheerful and fascinating, which Sir William unfortunately attributed to another cause, and by the time the Selwyn party left, he had, he believed, ingratiated himself most decidedly into her favour. Lady Beaumont had prevailed on Mrs. Selwyn to spend a day or two at Braybrook on their way to town, and thus far all seemed propitious to their views.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning, Mrs. Selwyn remarked to her daughter on Sir William's attention the previous evening ; and coupling that with his mother's invitation, said, —

“ Really Mary, I begin to think he has taken a great fancy to you, and will probably propose.”

“ Indeed I hope not, mamma.”

“ And why not, my dear Mary ?—he is very agreeable, with a beautiful place, splendid fortune, and a title also ; and more than all, he appears thoroughly domestic and amiable, and doats on his mother. A good son is sure to make a good husband.”

“But, dear mamma, you cannot forget my engagement to Harry Howard.”

“That, my dear, I consider nearly at an end, for I cannot bear to think of the rudeness and neglect of his family to us all ; and here, see the contrast—Lady Beaumont so kind and attentive, so really interested about you already—indeed, you would be the most fortunate girl in the world to enter such a family.”

“My dearest mamma,” said Mary, gravely, “you are only building castles in the air—no such things may ever have entered Sir William’s or Lady Beaumont’s imagination ; certainly, I see nothing beyond common politeness in his attentions, and had I thought anything more intended, my behaviour to him would have been very different.”

At this moment they were interrupted by other persons entering the room, and the subject was not again revived by Mrs. Selwyn.

Having business to transact in London, Mr. Selwyn could not be induced to prolong his visit beyond two days at Braybrook, during which

time, Mary, mindful of her mother's remarks about Sir William, carefully avoided giving him any cause for encouragement. Lady Beaumont and Mrs. Selwyn, as mothers generally do, expatiated on their children's perfections ; the former expressing a hope that they might become more intimately acquainted, as, from a similarity of tastes and disposition, they appeared formed for each other's society ; and before leaving Braybrook, Lady Beaumont obtained a promise from Mrs. Selwyn, that to compensate for her short visit then, she would take them on their return from London.

Mrs. Selwyn saw clearly the impression her daughter had produced both on Lady Beaumont and her son, and really believing her engagement with Harry Howard never would be brought to a happy issue, and that the sooner it could be broken off the better, rejoiced at the prospect now presented of her daughter's forming such a desirable connection, and hoped by persuasion and every other incentive, to prejudice her against any further thoughts of Harry Howard.

The day after their arrival in London, Mrs. Selwyn received a letter from a friend in Bath, informing her, that a gentleman well acquainted with Mr. Howard, senior, had stated his son's engagement with her daughter had been broken off, in consequence of his father's disapproval of the marriage.

"There, Mary," said her mother, handing her the letter, "my anticipations are confirmed; you have only heard once from Mr. Howard since you left home, and depend upon it my opinion is the correct one. Harry Howard, like other young men, flattered by the preference you have shewn him, and wishing to keep others at a distance, proposed for you in a moment of jealousy, and now, having gained his object by his indifference, clearly shews what his feelings were, and is trying to draw back."

"My dear mother," said Mary, "until assured of this from his own lips, I will never believe Harry Howard capable of such unmanly, dishonourable conduct; every action of his life

contradicts it ; and as for that letter, it contains only a little Bath scandal."

" Well, Mary, we can never agree on these points, and therefore, as solely out of consideration to your wishes, I gave my consent to Mr. Howard's addresses, now to oblige me, I hope, should your present engagement be broken off, you will not refuse Sir William. Surely you will grant your mother this reasonable request, as I can have no other motive but your own happiness in making it."

" My dearest mother, I would do almost any thing to oblige you ; but Henry Howard has possessed my first and warmest affections, and I feel assured I can never love another ; how then could I marry a man I did not love ?"

" That is all romance, my dear, about first love ; every silly girl thinks as you do, that her heart must break if she cannot marry the first man she falls in love with ; but in numberless cases her heart would *really* be broken, if she did marry him. There is not one woman out

of a hundred who marries her first choice, and fortunately, perhaps, for them they do not. Young people view all things through a magnifying glass; but when, in after-life, they look back upon the follies and fancies of their early years, they wonder how they could have entertained such absurd ideas. The surest and most enduring affection, is that founded on esteem; and where a woman marries a man of good character, amiable and affectionate disposition, and even temper, she will scarcely ever fail to love him afterwards, and respect him also."

"Well, dear mamma, that is my case precisely; I did not fall hastily in love with Harry, as you know, but my affection for him is founded on esteem. I respect him for his many good qualities; and, after three years' acquaintance, surely that is not falling in love carelessly, or without mature deliberation."

"All that I admit; but to be treated with indifference and neglect by the most estimable man in the world, ought to rouse the just pride of any girl who respects herself. The fact is,

you love him far better than he loves you, if he ever really did love you at all, which I have long doubted. Love should be strongest on the man's side, and here it is clearly the reverse."

"Well, mamma, if Harry Howard proves false to me, it will then be a matter of indifference, if I ever marry at all."

Mrs. Selwyn did not press the subject further, hoping she had gained a little ground in this discussion, and fully expecting Harry Howard would soon release her daughter from her engagement.

A few days after this conversation, Mary received a letter from Harry, rather coolly written, and upbraiding her with a flirtation with some gentleman at the races, which gratifying intelligence was of course communicated to him by a friend who was an eye-witness. Mary rather indignantly repelled this imputation on her loyalty to her lover, and, in consequence, their correspondence became very scanty during the month she remained in town, and which, with

her mother's constant remarks, produced a most unhappy state of mind.

Swayed alternately by hope and fear, Mary scarcely knew what to think, or what to do. The period had now arrived for their return to Braybrook, and the dread of offending her mother, by rejecting Sir William, should he propose, filled her with alarm ; although she resolved, should such a thing occur, to explain to him her real position.

Dejected in spirits, and pale in looks, Lady Beaumont was the first to notice her altered appearance on her return.

"Ah, my dear," she said, "London life does not, I see, agree with you—all the roses have disappeared from your cheeks, and you look harassed and out of spirits."

Mary's eyes filled with tears at this kind solicitude about her, and she made some trifling excuse, which Lady Beaumont answered, by saying, she must now enjoy a little repose with them in the country, and she hoped soon to see her as cheerful and happy as usual.

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In a few days the fresh air of the country produced the desired effect in her appearance, but her despondency and abstraction of thought still continued, and could no longer escape Lady Beaumont's or her son's observation. Sir William became thoughtful too, and endeavoured by the most respectful and soothing attentions to divert her from her melancholy. His kindness was felt and duly appreciated by Mary, and she dreaded to inflict pain on him.

Had she never known Harry, Sir William was a character she might have deeply esteemed if not loved; but now that was impossible; and her mother's remarks made her feel so thoroughly uncomfortable in his presence, that he no longer doubted her real position, and with a manly frankness resolved, if possible, to ascertain the truth from her own lips and relieve her from embarrassment.

An opportunity was not long wanting. Sir William was sitting writing letters in the library one morning after breakfast, the door leading to the morning-room being imperfectly closed, when

the following words from Mrs. Selwyn (who was alone with her daughter) struck his ear :—

“ I am grieved and vexed with you, Mary, for your distant and almost rude behaviour to Sir William, after all the kindness you have experienced from Lady Beaumont. It really distresses me to see you so cold and indifferent.”

“ I cannot help it, my dear mother. I am perfectly miserable !” bursting into tears. “ What would you wish me to do ? encourage the addresses of Sir William, when my heart belongs to another ? You would yourself despise me, if I could act so dishonourably.”

“ Nonsense, child ! I do not wish that exactly ; but you may behave with common civility to him, to oblige me, if your own feelings do not prompt you to treat with more respect Lady Beaumont’s son.”

A rustling in the library abruptly terminated the conversation at this point, caused by Sir William, purposely, to apprise them of some one being there—but he had heard enough. Mary quickly retreated to her own room (where

she remained a prey to the most miserable forebodings) until luncheon time. The carriage being ordered afterwards for a drive, she pleaded a bad headache as an excuse for remaining at home, and Sir William recollected he had some more letters to write—so that the two mammas and Mr. Selwyn took their seats in the carriage and drove off.

After they were gone, Mary returned to the morning-room for her work, intending to remain upstairs until their return. Hastily gathering her things together, she was leaving when Sir William entered.

“Ah! Miss Maitland,” he exclaimed, “this is very unkind, to be running away and shutting yourself up in your own room again—but, seriously, a walk would do you much more good, and relieve your headache. Pray take my advice—you can walk alone if you prefer it; but do take a few turns this fine afternoon.”

“Oh no, thank you, Sir William; I think I shall be better by remaining quiet in my room.”

“No, Miss Maitland,” said he gravely, but

decidedly ; “ forgive my presumption in so urging it, but I am quite sure you will not ; I press it merely as a friend, who feels distressed to see you so out of spirits, and pale ; and if you doubt my singleness of purpose, I promise, on my word of honour, if you will allow me to be your companion, the word ‘ love ’ shall not escape my lips.”

Mary blushed crimson at these last words ; and, still hesitating, Sir William added—

“ Well, Miss Maitland, if nothing else will satisfy your scruples, I tell you frankly, I know you love another—now, will you trust me ?”

The colour again suffused her face and forehead, when, observing her confusion, he quickly said—

“ Come, run up stairs like a good girl, put on your bonnet, and I will tell you all about it. Curiosity will tempt you now, if nothing else.”

“ Well,” she said, turning quickly away, “ I will do as you wish.”

In ten minutes she returned equipped for a

walk, and on joining Sir William, he gaily said—

“ You see, Miss Maitland, there is nothing so alluring to a woman as curiosity, and, notwithstanding your many perfections, you are a true daughter of Eve still.”

“ And yet, Sir William, I am not now acting from curiosity, for I know already how you learnt my secret.”

After leaving the house they walked side by side for a few moments in silence, when Sir William said, offering his arm,—

“ Now, Miss Maitland, there is no longer any occasion for your reserve towards me ; we understand each other, and I hope you will for the future consider me a friend, really interested in your happiness.”

“ As such, Sir William, I shall always be happy to regard you.”

“ Very well, then don't address me so formally again ; and now tell me who your lover is, and why your mother disapproves of him, for, unfortunately, I learnt thus much from your con-

versation this morning, unwittingly, believe me, the library door being ajar, and in common justice to yourself, I wish to know more."

Mary then gave him a short account of her attachment to Harry—her mother's approval of his addresses, and her subsequent annoyance at his father's neglect in calling or writing, which led her to suppose their engagement was not approved of by him, and therefore must be broken off.

"And so your mamma wishes you to think of some one else," rejoined Sir William.

"Even so," she replied, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Come, come," he said, soothingly, "don't sigh so mournfully, there's a good girl, you have been sighing and crying enough these three or four days past—those tell-tale eyes betray you. But now tell me of Mr. Howard—what sort of person he is, and about his eccentric father."

She then gave him a short description of both, portraying her lover in most glowing terms.

“ Well,” he said, “ we must allow a little for over-colouring in these cases ; but if Harry Howard is anything like the man you represent him to be, he must be one in a thousand ; really I feel anxious to be acquainted with such a character—will you introduce me, if I come down to Bath this winter ?”

“ Oh, gladly,” she replied ; “ I am sure you will like him, he is so much like——”

“ Who ?” he asked ; “ come, finish your sentence.”

“ Yourself, I was going to say.”

“ Then, of course, I must like him, so that point is settled before-hand. Your mother, I conclude, objects to your marriage, because it is not a good match for you—perhaps he is not wealthy enough. Is it not so ?”

“ Not exactly ; but she fears as he is at present dependent on his father, we may not be able to marry for some time, and she dislikes long engagements.”

“ So do all mammas—that is nothing strange. But he is to enter some profession, is he not ?”

“Yes ; I believe the Church or the Law.”

“Not the latter, I hope ; but if the former, your marriage shall not be delayed for want of preferment, as I have a good living in my gift now, and that shall belong to Harry Howard.”

“Oh, Sir William, how can I ever sufficiently thank you for your disinterested kindness—your generous feelings to one almost a stranger.”

“Strangers we are now no longer ; and if you really wish to please me, consider me from this time as your brother. Brothers and sisters you know we all are, or ought to be, in feelings towards each other, as children of one common parent, who has commanded us ‘to love one another.’”

“Yes,” she replied ; “but there is so much selfishness in the world, that few love any but themselves.”

“Very true ; but you, I, and Harry Howard, are not worldly-minded people, so we, to set a good example, must follow the good advice ‘to love one another.’ And now, in return for your confidence in me, and to show you that I

am in earnest, to be henceforth entitled to your regard, I will candidly confess all my feelings towards you since our meeting at Ascot Races."

He then told her the first impression produced upon him; his mother's opinion, and from that day their increasing esteem for her; and he added, "but for your reserve towards me, for which I guessed the cause, I avow frankly I should have fallen desperately in love with you; as it is, I am only half saved, and must love you still. Is not this candid in me?"

"Oh yes; but I am indeed sorry to have given a moment's pain to yourself or dear Lady Beaumont—this makes me quite unhappy—I must appear so ungrateful for all her kindness."

"Don't think any such thing—had you acted differently, we should have esteemed you less. Pray do not believe us so unreasonable or insensible to your rectitude of conduct, which will endear you to us both so much the more."

"I am so happy to hear you say so," she replied; "it relieves me of a load of anxiety."

“Well, now you will be much more happy and cheerful, and I will ask my mother to speak to Mrs. Selwyn in favour of Harry Howard.”

“Pray don’t do that; mamma would be so angry if she thought I had mentioned the subject to you, which I almost feel I ought not to have done; but as you knew so much by accident, I have confided the rest to you as a friend.”

“And as a friend,” he said, “I will strictly regard your confessions as you must mine—not even my mother shall know what you have told me this day. Are you satisfied with my promise?”

“Perfectly so.”

“Then give me your hand as a pledge of friendship.”

This was readily offered, and raised to his lips.

“Even Harry Howard would not be offended at this.”

“Yes,” she said, “I fear he would. He is very jealous.”

“And so he ought to be, of such a sweet,

dear, affectionate girl as yourself—but tell me now, how is the head-ache?”

“Quite gone, thank you.”

“So I thought ; and here we are at the north view, where you refused to walk with me alone the other day—you won’t be afraid to trust me for the future, I hope, and take a regular walk after breakfast when you have nothing better to do.”

Thus all restraint being removed, they rambled about, conversing on various subjects, until they saw the carriage returning.

“Really,” remarked Sir William, “the time has passed so agreeably, that I was not aware we had been out so long ; but there is one comfort, we shall not be lectured by our mammas on our return.”

Lady Beaumont and Mrs. Selwyn were delighted to hear that their children had gone out for a walk together, and had not yet returned to the house ; and at dinner, Mary’s cheerful and happy looks afforded them both extreme delight.

From that day no further reserve was visible in Mary's manner towards Sir William. They walked together frequently, and often sat in earnest conversation by themselves during the evening, and appeared, as they really were, on the most intimate terms.

Mrs. Selwyn was extremely pleased by this sudden alteration in her daughter, and began to flatter herself she had, on reflection, thought it prudent to follow her advice; she therefore carefully forbore any further reference to Harry, hoping he would soon be forgotten. Lady Beaumont was not, however, so easily deceived; and, from an unguarded expression let fall by her son, she feared he had been disappointed, but she did not like to press the matter further then.

Thus pleasantly and rapidly passed a fortnight at Braybrook, Mary Maitland being relieved from further importunities or remarks by her mother, although still unhappy at Harry's silence, having had no letter from him since leaving London, when, to her great delight, Mr.

Selwyn received a letter which required his immediate return to Elm Grove.

The next day, therefore, was fixed for their departure, and Sir William and Mary took their last stroll together. The sun was just setting in dazzling splendour as they reached the western side of the copse wood above the house, where a pretty rustic arbour had been constructed, with seats outside and within, from which the eye rested on a beautiful undulating valley below, through which meandered a pretty little stream, contributing to the lake beneath them, and from which originated the name of the place, Braybrook.

Sir William sat in gloomy abstraction for a few moments, as he gazed on the scene, and then turning to his companion, said, in a melancholy tone,—

“When that bright orb shall have accomplished another revolution, you will be far away, and I shall be seated here again, thinking of this, to me, sad parting. Happier scenes are, I hope, awaiting you, but I shall feel desolate and alone.”

“Oh no,” she said, “you cannot feel desolate with a mother so kind and affectionate, whose whole happiness is centred in yourself.”

“Heaven forbid!” he replied, “that I should be insensible to my dear mother’s devotion to her only child; but it is natural for us to entertain other affections also. There are various kinds of love, all nearly equally intense, though varying with the object, and we may feel all at one and the same time, without their interfering with each other. Love for parents, brother’s love; love for friends, and conjugal love. All these may, and do often exist in the same heart, and none militates against the other. I love my mother dearly—brothers I have none to love—friend, deserving that name, I know not. I have long lamented, oh, how deeply (and the tears stood in his eyes), a dear sister consigned to an early grave, and now that in you she seemed restored to me again, she is rudely snatched away. My poor mother and myself have often traced in the lineaments of your features, and that soft, winning smile, a great

resemblance to our lost Helen ; can you wonder, then, at our both loving you so well, since every day has tended to twine you more and more about our hearts ?”

“ Oh, now,” she said, playfully, “ dear Lady Beaumont and yourself have conjured up an ideal image. I am but a foolish, wayward girl, and were I to remain here much longer, you would soon be tired of my company. You have only seen one side of the picture ; I am on my good behaviour now, but see me at home, cross, fretful, bad-tempered, &c.”

“ That you can never be,” he added, interrupting her ; “ but even so, I may say with the poet—

‘ If to her share some female errors fall,
Look in her face, and you forget them all.’ ”

“ Really,” she said, suddenly rising, “ I cannot listen to such adulation a minute longer. We must return to the house, or they will think we are lost.”

"Don't go yet," he begged; "it is our last evening, and who can tell when we shall meet again—if ever?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "that may soon be; you have promised to visit Bath this winter, and that time will soon arrive; but now let us go, for I feel quite chilly sitting here so long."

'Well, you shall do as you wish; but before we part, promise that if, at any time, or under any circumstances, you may require the aid and sympathy of a true friend, you will, without hesitation or delay, apply to me.'

She hesitated for a moment, when he said reproachfully—

"I see you will not trust, and do not yet regard me as a true friend; but if you knew how happy that promise would make me, you could not, would not, refuse this, the last and only favour I have asked."

"Then," she said, "I promise you I will."

"Give your hand, then," which being extended, he held for a moment, and clasping a

bracelet on her arm, said emphatically, "That, as a pledge of your promise, you must wear for my sake; and when you look on it, remember your absent friend."

Mary was affected almost to tears by his melancholy look and voice, and could make no reply.

"Now let us go," he said, quickly; "but I dread, from what I already know, that with your mother's sentiments towards Mr. Howard, you may have much unpleasantness and unhappiness to encounter yet; and should troubles come upon you, I must and will stand your friend; so now, secure of your promise, I am satisfied."

"Well, but you must keep yours also, of coming to see us in the winter, or before, at Elm Grove;" and thus they returned leisurely to the house.

On entering the drawing-room, Mrs. Selwyn observed the bracelet on her daughter's arm, and from the long absence and serious looks of both, drew the most happy auguries. Lady

Baumont also was in high spirits, and beckoning Mary to her side, said—

“Mrs. Selwyn has invited me to spend a few days at Elm Grove the week after next ; is this disagreeable news, my dear ?”

“Oh, dear, Lady Beaumont ! I shall be so glad to see you there, and show you all our pretty views and scenery ; it will make me so happy.”

“Well, my love, this is to me quite an unexpected pleasure, for I feared we might not meet again for a long time ; but I don’t know what William will say to my engagement. Here he comes, looking so gloomy.—Now, William,” said his mother, “I am going to leave home the week after next ; you will accompany me on my travels ?”

“Of course, my dear mother, you need scarcely ask that question ; but where are you going ?”

“Not very far, just now—only to Mrs. Selwyn’s. Have you any engagement to prevent your leaving home ?”

"None at all," he replied, cheerfully ; "and even if I had, it should be postponed. This is really an unexpected pleasure."

"So I thought it would be," said Lady Beaumont ; "and now my pet, here, looks tired with her walk. I shall send her to her room very soon, as she has to leave early to-morrow morning. But first ring the bell ; she must have a glass of warm wine and water."

Refreshments being brought in, the ladies soon after retired.

The first to make her appearance in the breakfast-room the next morning was Mary Maitland, who found Sir William already there, looking out of the window. On her entrance, he turned, and shaking hands with her, said—

"Come with me a moment into the garden ; I wish to show you a particular rose."

He led her to a flower border, in the centre of which was a deep hole, and a rose-tree lying near it.

“Now,” he said, “will you place that tree in the ground whilst I throw the earth round it?”

“With pleasure ; but it will scarcely grow at this season of the year. Why did you plant it now?”

“That is your tree, planted by you, and an emblem of our friendship. That is late planted, but with fostering care and in a genial soil, our late-formed tie may and will, I hope, not only live, but flourish, as I trust this rose-tree will, with watering and tending ; care on my part shall never be wanting. If it dies, I shall consider it as a bad omen.”

At this moment the breakfast-bell rung, and they hurried back to the house. The parting between these newly-formed friends was very tender, Lady Beaumont straining Mary to her heart, while the tears stood in her eyes, Sir William looking enviously on their affectionate embrace. He, however, held her hand firmly in his own for a few seconds,

pressed it to his lips, and silently led her to the carriage. On leaving her, he repeated, in a low, earnest tone, "Remember your promise."

CHAPTER XIV.

ON the second day after leaving Braybrook, Mary Maitland was once more at home, in nervous expectation of again beholding her dearly-loved Harry, to whom she had previously written, apprising him of the day of their return, and fondly hoped to see him the same evening. It was, not, however, till the day following, about noon, that he made his appearance, and then accompanied by his young brother Harold. Although kind, his look and manner lacked that warmth of expression which poor Mary expected after their long separation. Harold appeared brought purposely, as a check to a more tender

meeting. The subject of her flirtation (as he chose to call it) at Ascot was revived and commented on by Harry, which she rather warmly repelled, saying she had only been obliged by the press of the crowd to take Sir William's arm.

"But I am sure," she added, "when you see what a quiet, staid-looking personage he is, you will not feel jealous of his attention."

"Do you expect him, then, here?" he inquired.

"Yes; mamma has invited Lady Beaumont and her son, the week after next."

"Indeed!" said he.

"Why, after their kindness to us all during our stay at Braybrook, she could do no less."

"Oh, of course not," he replied, rather sarcastically.

Mrs. Selwyn entered the room at this juncture, and her reception of Harry being evidently very cool, and intentionally so, as he thought, he soon after took his leave, not having been invited to stay or dine with them, as usual.

Harry's visits were few and far between until the Beaumonts arrived at Elm Grove, for he clearly perceived and felt the alteration in Mrs. Selwyn's manner to him ; in fact, he thought to himself, *she*, at least, clearly wishes our engagement at an end ; and this idea was both painful and humiliating to his high spirit.

Mrs. Selwyn secretly rejoiced at the coolness which had ensued between her daughter and Harry, saying and doing all in her power to widen the breach, and judging from his jealous disposition, that when Sir William arrived, a final estrangement would take place between them ; for although she had ascertained from Mary that no proposal had yet been made by him, she felt perfectly satisfied by his looks and behaviour, that such could not much longer be delayed, and hoped, from her daughter's reserve on the subject, that her eyes were now opened to her very unsatisfactory position with her former lover.

The Beaumonts were cordially welcomed at Elm Grove, but Sir William had not as yet ex-

plained to his mother his views towards Miss Maitland, although he had gone so far as to state his opinion still remained the same ; that she would never become his wife. The day after their arrival, Sir William took a stroll with Mary through the grounds, and almost his first enquiry was about Harry Howard.

“To tell you the truth,” she said, “I have seen little of him since my return, and I think he has taken umbrage at mamma’s coolness, who received him so very distantly.”

“I am sorry to hear this, but hope I shall have soon an opportunity of being introduced.”

“I doubt his calling now,” she replied ; “and unless mamma invites him to dine here, there is not much probability of your meeting.”

Mrs. Selwyn having issued invitations to the surrounding families for a large dinner-party, to do honour to her guests, Harry Howard was omitted from the list, and his cousin also.

“Surely, mamma,” said her daughter, “you do not intend to pass over Harry Howard ; he will feel this slight so severely.”

“ I really cannot help it, my dear ; my table is full without him, or his cousin ; and as for feeling the slight, I hope and wish he may feel it, as he has made me feel his insolence to us all. I shall resent his conduct, if you have not the proper spirit to do so.”

“ Oh, mamma, he ought not to be punished for his father.”

“ Perhaps not—yet his own conduct is equally bad ;—but I am tired of the subject, my dear, and wish all the Howards at the Land’s End ;” saying which, she flounced out of the room.

The day was often spent by Sir William and Mr. Selwyn, accompanied by Mary, in rides about the country, and they also were seen walking together about the grounds, which was of course, made known to Harry, and people began to talk of his being supplanted by Sir William Beaumont ; which appearances seemed to justify. Mrs. Selwyn also encouraging the rumours, by talking of his attentions to her daughter.

“ Ah,” thought Harry mournfully, “ title and

wealth will win the day, and poor Henry be rejected," and yet he thought, "I can scarcely blame her, when her mother's wishes are added also. Thus perish all my high-flown ideas of woman's constancy!"

The day of the dinner-party arrived, to which John Power, and a few other acquaintances of Harry's, were purposely invited by Mrs. Selwyn, to report Sir William's attentions to her daughter; and thus she hoped to put the finishing blow to his expectations.

Power remarked with pain Harry's absence, enquiring the cause of Miss Maitland, which was not satisfactorily explained, and mentioning the subject also to Mrs. Selwyn, as if casually, drew his conclusions from her reply, that he was to be discarded.

"Ah, I see," said he, mentally, "this Sir William is to be the mother's man, if not the daughter's; but I shall watch them narrowly to-night."

Power, after the ladies had left the dining-room, entered into conversation with Sir Wil-

liam, to draw him out, if possible, and asked him if he was fond of hunting.

“Why, not particularly,” was the reply ; “I sometimes join the hounds on a fine day, to meet my friends, but have no great passion for the sport.”

“Well,” he said, “we have a capital sportsman, and a good fellow to boot, living close by, whom I think you would like to know,—Harry Howard—and I certainly did expect to meet him here to-night, as he is the life of every party.”

“Is he then so agreeable?” enquired Sir William.

“Yes,” replied John, warming in his friend’s praise ; “there is not a man, rich or poor, in the whole county, who does not love and respect Harry Howard.”

“Then,” said Sir William, “I should be glad to make his acquaintance.”

“Well, I dare say he will call here soon, as he and Miss Maitland are very great friends, if not something more.”

Here their conversation was interrupted, by Mr. Selwyn addressing Sir William on another subject. On joining the ladies, Power remarked Sir William's close attention and familiar converse with Mary Maitland, from which he augured the most fatal consequences to his friend's happiness.

"Confound it all!" he murmured, "poor Harry will be cut out at last, to a dead certainty, by that titled fellow; he is so gentlemanly and agreeable; the game is over now.—Alas, poor Harry!—but I will warn him of his danger;" which he accordingly did, the next day, and confirmed his friend's worst anticipations.

The third day after the dinner-party, Sir William was riding in company with Mr. Selwyn and Miss Maitland, when cantering towards home, a sheep-dog sprung suddenly over the wall, close to Sir William's horse, which instantly swerving, threw his rider on his neck, where with one foot still hanging in the stirrup, and his hands grasping his mane, the horse galloped furiously away. Mr. Selwyn and

Miss Maitland were horrified at the sight. The servant rode quickly after him, shouting and halloing to attract attention, which only increased the horse's terror and speed. Sir William had become nearly exhausted—his hold of the horse's mane relaxed, and his head had just fallen to the ground, when a horseman met him in his fatal career, and seeing the impossibility of at once checking the runaway horse, turned as he passed, and riding by his side, seized the near rein close to the bit, then suddenly checking his own steed with a violent jerk at the other's mouth, which caused him to rear, concentrating all his strength for one desperate effort, he pulled the horse over on his back, and in a second threw his whole weight upon his neck to prevent his rising. To cut the girths across with his pocket-knife was the work of an instant, by which Sir William was released, and lay motionless on the ground. Harry Howard (for he it was, who had been fortunately riding in that direction) raised Sir William in his arms, and carried him to the road-

side-bank, where he leant over his insensible rival, untying his neckcloth, and supporting his head upon his knee. The servant soon approached.

"Here," said Harry, "jump off, and take my hat to the pond there, and fill it with water—quick, why do you stand staring there?"

The man obeyed, and had returned with the water, which Harry applied copiously to the head and face of Sir William, who was now beginning to recover, when Mr. Selwyn and Miss Maitland reached the spot.

"Oh!" exclaimed the latter piteously, "he is killed!"

"No," replied Harry, raising his head, and regarding her with a stern look, "your lover is only stunned, he will soon recover; but if you would render him assistance, ride home directly, send the carriage here, and dispatch your servant for a surgeon without delay."

Mr. Selwyn hearing these words, said hastily,

"Come Mary, let us go, this is no scene for you;" and taking her horse's bridle, led her

away. Sir William gradually recovered his consciousness, and began to enquire the cause of his accident.

“That is more than I can tell you,” said Harry, “but have you any bones broken?—let me feel.”

All appeared in their right place. “Come, sir, there is not much harm done I hope, you may feel thankful you are no worse.”

“But who,” asked Sir William, “are you, to whom I am indebted for my life?”

“No matter,” said Harry, “I would have done the same to save the life of a dog,—you owe me no thanks!”

The carriage soon arrived, and having assisted Sir William into it, Harry Howard mounted his horse, (which had stood by him the while,) and rode quickly away, no one noticing a gash he had received on his face by the foot of the floundering horse, when struggling to free himself, from his grasp. Sir William, on reaching Elm Grove, was persuaded by Mr. Selwyn to permit himself to be placed on his bed, until the doctor arrived, who having bled him, requested

that he might be kept very quiet, and gave him some opiate; but he would not rest satisfied until he enquired the name of his deliverer.

“Oh!” said Mr. Selwyn, “he is a neighbour of ours, Mr. Howard.”

“Harry Howard! is that the person who has saved my life?”

“Yes, Sir William; but he is a wild fox-hunter, and thinks nothing of stopping a runaway horse.”

“Perhaps *he* may not, Mr. Selwyn, but *I* do. Thank you. I hope I shall now do pretty well.”

Lady Beaumont was in a dreadful state of alarm and excitement, until her darling son was declared out of danger; and nothing would induce her to leave him, that first night. When the doctor called the next morning, he found him so much better, that he was allowed to leave his room; and his presence in the drawing-room was hailed with delight by the ladies. On the third morning he came down to breakfast equipped for a ride, which his mother perceiving, said—

“Where, my dear William, can you be going this morning ; surely not to ride again ?”

“Yes, my dear mother ; where should I be going but to thank my deliverer, for saving your son’s life ; that is my next duty, after rendering thanks to God.”

“Then pray do not ride that same horse, you are too weak yet ; but I dare say Miss Maitland will lend you hers.”

“With the greatest pleasure,” replied Mary ; “pray take him—he is so quiet.”

“But why go at all ?” enquired Mrs. Selwyn ; “a letter of thanks will do as well.”

“Not for me, Mrs. Selwyn,” replied Sir William very gravely ; “my *personal* thanks are justly due, and those have been already too long delayed.”

CHAPTER XV.

ON arriving at Beechwood, Sir William enquired of the servant who came to the door, if Mr. Harry Howard was at home.

"No, sir," was the answer, "he has just left; but Master is in the house."

"Will you give him this card then, and say I shall be glad to see him."

Mr. Howard now made his appearance in the hall, where Sir William was standing, having left his horse in the care of his servant.

"I presume, sir," said Sir William, bowing, "I have the honour of addressing Mr. Howard?"

“My name is Howard ; and yours, I conclude, is Sir William Beaumont?”

The latter bowed again ; and asked if he could see his son, for whom more especially his visit was intended.

“I am sorry to say, Sir William, my son left home this morning on a visit to a friend,—but pray walk into the library. I can forward any message you may wish delivered to him, if you will explain the object of your calling.”

When they were left alone, Sir William, turning to Mr. Howard, said, “The object I had in view, was to return my personal thanks to your son, for having saved my life the other day ; illness alone has prevented me doing so before, and I am now deeply grieved to find myself deprived of the pleasure of pouring out my thanks and gratitude for his generous conduct.”

“Oh !” said Mr. Howard, “there was no occasion to give yourself this trouble, or think so much of a trifling occurrence, which happens

daily in a foxhunter's life, without being noticed at all. Harry told me, he had stopped a runaway horse the other day, and saved his rider from a spill ; that was all."

"But that is not all, Mr. Howard, although your son might speak so lightly of it."

Sir William then gave him the whole account, and assured him that but for his son's resolute and determined conduct, his death had been inevitable in a few seconds.

"Well," said Mr. Howard, "you were in an awkward predicament, I must confess, and right glad I am to find my boy Harry arrived just in the nick of time. That's a brave lad, Sir William, although his father says so, and I am proud of such a son ; but the young rogue did not tell me all these particulars, or how he got that gash across his forehead."

"But pray, Mr. Howard, when do you expect his return home?" asked Sir William.

"Not for a month, perhaps ; he is gone on a visit to an old friend in a distant county."

Sir William rose from his chair, and paced

the room in gloomy abstraction, as if unaware of Mr. Howard's presence.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" he enquired; "I will tell Harry all you would wish to express, and that I am quite sure is sufficient."

"No, Mr. Howard, that is not all, or half I had to say. I fear I may not tell you more."

"Yes you may. Harry and I have no secrets between us, not even in love affairs; so speak openly."

Sir William then briefly recounted his first meeting with Miss Maitland; the way in which he obtained the knowledge of her attachment to his son, her subsequent confessions to him, and her misery at their present estrangement; concluding with a high-flown and warm panygeric on her many perfections of mind and person. Mr. Howard listened in silence until the last sentence, when suddenly jumping from his chair, and placing his right hand on Sir William's shoulder, looking steadfastly in his face, he exclaimed—

“By Jupiter Ammon! you are in love with the girl yourself!”

“Not so, Mr. Howard;” although the sudden flush in his face seemed to belie his words; “but I like her very much, and prize her as a dear sister.”

“Hah—hah! Sir William, so I thought; you all love each other at first as brothers and sisters—it is the fashion now-a-days; so did Harry talk a deal about brotherly love at first, but it all ends in the old way. As you like this Miss Maitland so much, however, and think her so perfect, why not marry her yourself? That’s the best thing you can do, as I do not wish Harry to marry yet, and I think he is getting a little cool on the subject.—In short, I hope he will never leave me, and if this girl should fancy you, he won’t fall in love again in a hurry—if ever—I’ll engage—”

“But, Mr. Howard, is there not a little too much selfishness in your wishes, to prevent your son marrying a sweet-tempered girl, who will make him happy and comfortable when you, in

the common course of nature, may be withdrawn from him. Were he to search the world over, he would never, perhaps, find one so calculated in every respect to make any man happy."

"Then take her yourself, I say, Sir William."

"No, Mr. Howard—never! but as you like candour, I will frankly own I could love that girl with my whole heart, and would marry her if I could—but there are two reasons why I never can; her long and prior attachment to your son; and secondly, that I prefer her happiness to my own; and she will never be happy without Harry Howard. But now—if you cannot conveniently, at present, provide for him—I have a good living in my gift, which shall be his as soon as he marries Mary Maitland."

"By Jove! Sir William, you are one of the right sort; give me your hand. Why, you are just like my boy Harry; but I cannot permit him to accept your generous offer, as I have also two livings in the family, and I hope enough besides to make him comfortable for life."

"Then will you give your consent to his marrying Miss Maitland?"

"He has had that long ago."

"Then why, may I ask, have you never called on Mr. Selwyn?"

"My visiting days are past, Sir William; and I do not like the man, that's the truth, and never shall."

"Then will you allow me to ride with Miss Maitland over here, *just* to see if I have given you a false report?"

"With all my heart. I shall be glad to see her."

"One more request, Mr. Howard, and I have done. Will you prevail on your son to return home as soon as you can?"

"I will try and do so."

"I thank you, Mr. Howard, with my whole heart, for your kind compliance, and now I must wish you good morning for the present; but you shall soon see me again."

"The sooner, and the oftener, the better; you are a man after my own heart." Saying

which, he shook him cordially by the hand, and they parted.

On Sir William's return to Elm Grove, many questions were asked by his mother, about Mr. Howard, sen., to which he replied—

“I may sum up all I can say in one sentence—I like him excessively.”

“But he is a very odd, morose man, I have heard,” remarked Mrs. Selwyn.

“Rather odd he is, certainly,” replied Sir William; “but one of the most cheerful, kind-hearted men I ever met.”

At this moment, a servant entered with a letter, which he gave to Miss Maitland, who, on glancing at the handwriting, left the room.

Not returning for some time, Sir William went to the stable, and, seeing a strange servant, inquired where he came from.

“That is Mr. Harry's groom,” was the reply.

The truth flashed across his mind at once. He returned to the house, and wrote a few lines to Miss Maitland, which he desired might be

given to her maid, to take to her room ; they ran as follows :—

“ I know from whom your letter comes ; don’t distress yourself, but join me in the shrubbery walk behind the house, as soon as you can, for I have news which will render you happy.

“ W. B.”

In about ten minutes Mary went down by the back staircase, and found Sir William in the walk.

“ Ah !” he said, “ those red eyes betray what has occurred. You have received an unpleasant letter from Harry Howard ; but don’t regard that. I had a long conversation with Mr. Howard this morning, about you and him, and all is as it ought to be.” He then told her what he had said about his approval of his son’s choice, and his dislike to call on Mr. Selwyn.

“ Oh !” she said, “ this letter has rendered me quite miserable ; he never could have written thus if he really loved me, and now he seems to have given me up entirely.”

“Come, come,” said Sir William; “do not give way thus—will you let me see his letter?”

“I should hesitate to do so, but after your kind interest in me, I cannot refuse to let you read it; but you must not allude to its contents, or he will never forgive me.”

It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR MARY,

“Do not think me influenced by jealousy or any other morbid feeling, in addressing you as I now do; but from what has lately transpired, I should be wanting both in respect to myself and regard for your true happiness, were I to hesitate a moment longer in releasing you from your engagement to me; and my reasons for thus acting are very obvious. Your mother’s late conduct to me, coupled with her remarks to John Power, is conclusive evidence that she now regrets ever having sanctioned my addresses to her daughter; and I am neither surprised nor offended, that she should, with a mother’s anxiety, wish you to form another

connection in every respect so desirable. As regards yourself, the reports of Sir William Beaumont's very particular attentions have, of course, reached me, and from Power's observation, and your own deep sympathy for him (expressed by looks, which I could scarcely misconstrue) when thrown from his horse the other day, seem convincing proofs of your sentiments towards him. Yours, however, is no isolated case. Many girls fancy themselves deeply in love with one man, until they meet with another, more congenial to their taste, or better suited to their expectations; and it is, indeed, most fortunate, when this discovery is made prior to that indissoluble bond of marriage. With perfect candour I am free to admit, that Sir William is in many respects my superior—in station, fortune, mental endowments, and disposition—in short, he appears, and is, I am told, calculated to render you as perfectly happy as this world admits of. The contrast between him and myself is, perhaps, rather humiliating to my pride, for I am only a wayward, impulsive

child of nature, whilst he is a man of refined taste, polished manners, and extensive acquirements—formed to shine in society, and adorn the high position in which he stands. In pure and honourable principles, however, and intensity of feeling, I yield to no man living. I can only add, may your expectations of happiness be realized. My absence from home may be of some duration; but it matters little now, what may become of your once truly devoted

“HARRY HOWARD.”

Sir William read the letter attentively, then returned it, with one observation—

“That is just the conduct I should have expected from Harry Howard; but he shall be outwitted for once, and we must beat him with his own weapons. Now, as my mother and Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn are going early into Bath to-morrow, you and I must plead excuses, and ride over, after they are gone, to see Mr. Howard.”

“ Oh, but Sir William, mamma would never forgive me for doing such a thing.”

“ It will be my act and deed, not yours,” he replied ; “ in desperate cases we must use desperate remedies, and unless I gain Mr. Howard to my side, Harry will never return. His father alone can manage to recall him, and he has promised to do so ; but we must not delay, as he wishes, I know, to see you, and for all that may happen, I alone am answerable.”

Mary’s scruples were at last overcome by her strong desire to recover her lost lover, and she trusted in Sir William’s sense of propriety not to compromise her in any way. They accordingly, the next morning, rode over to Beechwood after the carriage had left, and found Mr. Howard at home. Sir William was at once admitted, and said, on shaking hands with him—

“ You assured me, Mr. Howard, you would be glad to see me at any time, and as often as I liked to call, so you see I have taken you at your word, and have improved on that privilege, by

bringing with me, in our ride together, Miss Maitland."

Mr. Howard surveyed her steadily for a moment, while holding her hand; her timid and tearful eye fixed inquiringly on his, with a look so tender and imploring, that it struck at once to his generous and warm heart.

"Come," he said, "excuse an old man's freedom;" and, folding her in his arms, he imprinted a kiss on her forehead, exclaiming, — "Harry's choice is his father's also, and worthy of his love. My dear child, Harry has not deceived me; but now come into the drawing-room. You know we have long been neighbours, although never have met before; so, now the ice is broken, you must come and see me often."

Then turning to Sir William, he remarked—

"You have not overcoloured the picture."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Howard, and I hope, also, I have not overstepped the bounds of decorum in introducing my young friend."

"Not a whit—I am really obliged to you for

so doing ; it was my only chance of seeing her—and now, my dear child,” said he, going up to her in the most affectionate manner, “ take off your riding-hat, and sit down, while I send for Anne. You must take some luncheon with me to-day.”

“ Indeed, I fear,” she said, “ we must return almost immediately.”

“ You will do no such thing, my dear. I am master here, in my own house, and you and Sir William do not leave it until we have had a glass of wine together.”

Sir William interposed also, to be excused, fearing their party might return before them.

“ It won’t do, Sir William. Harry must obey his wayward father, and so will his wife—won’t you ?” turning to her.

“ Indeed, I will,” she said, with her sweetest smile.

“ That’s right, my child ; yet I am not very hard to please, only I like to have my own way, when I believe it to be for my children’s good.

But now, about this little quarrel with Harry who went off in a pet the other morning ; you want him brought back again, don't you ?”

“ Oh, indeed, I should be so thankful, if you could prevail on him to return, that I might see him, if only for one moment, to explain all. His letter has made me so utterly wretched ; indeed, Mr. Howard, I am almost broken-hearted ;” and she could no longer restrain her emotion, but burst into tears, sobbing convulsively.

“ Come, come, my poor child,” said Mr. Howard, quite affected himself, “ don't, there's a good girl, a woman's tears quite unman me. I shall begin to cry myself—there, my dear,” approaching and kissing her, “ don't fret any more — I'll bring Master Harry back in a twinkling, so dry up your tears ; and now,” ringing the bell, “ you shall have a glass of wine, while I write him a few lines, which you shall see.”

They ran thus :—

“MY DEAR HARRY,

“We have had a mad dog prowling about ; he has bitten some of the hounds ; so if you don’t come home *directly* you receive this, and attend to them yourself, I shall order the keeper to shoot the whole lot, to prevent accidents and further trouble.

“Your affectionate Father,

“J. HOWARD.”

“There, my dear,” said Mr. Howard, placing the letter in Mary’s hands ; “if that don’t bring him back, nothing will, so take it and post it yourself ; but Sir William may see it also.”

The latter laughed outright at this quaint method of recovering a truant lover ; and a happy smile for a moment lit up Mary’s features.

“Now, child,” said Mr. Howard, as the servant entered with wine and biscuits, pouring out a glass ; “drink that, to rouse your spirits.”

Then turning to the servant, said—

“Tell your mistress to make herself tidy as

soon as possible, as there is a lady and gentleman waiting to see her, and they won't leave the house till they do."

In a few minutes the man returned, saying his mistress had gone out for a walk.

"Oh, the old story, when visitors arrive. Well, Thomas, I'm sorry for it; but just run after her and say, that if, in a quarter of an hour, by the house clock, she does not come down into the drawing-room, I'll stuff the cat into the parrot's cage, and there they shall remain till she does, that's all. Mind you give my message."

"Yes, sir," said Thomas, as he ran chuckling along the hall; "that'll fetch her down, I'll warrant, and Mrs. Martha too."

In a few minutes, without any one appearing, the drawing-room door was quietly opened, and a female voice cried, in a low voice, "Puss! puss!" The cat jumped up from the rug at the summons, and so did Mr. Howard from his chair, and caught puss by the tail before she could reach the door.

“Come, Martha,” cried he, “none of your tricks upon travellers. I’ve got the cat, and now I’ll throw her out of window among the terriers, if your mistress don’t make her appearance *directly*.”

“Well, sir, but you won’t hurt missus’s favourite cat, I know.”

“Won’t I, though,” said he; “just try me.”

“Missus will be down directly, sir,” replied the lady’s maid.

“So I thought, now the cat’s in limbo.”

“Oh, pray don’t hurt the cat, Mr. Howard!” said Mary, imploringly.

“Here, then, my dear, take her in your lap, she is very quiet; and if Mrs. Anne does not kiss you for saving poor pussy, if for no other reason, I am much mistaken.”

Sir William laughed outright at these droll proceedings, in which Mary could not help joining a little.

“Ah, well may you laugh,” said Mr. Howard, with great good humour; “we are a very lively family in this old rabbit-burrow of a

house ; what with ghosts, apes, dogs, cats, and birds, there is no want of entertainment ; but the worst of the lot is that confounded monkey. What do you think he did the other day ?”

“ I can’t imagine,” said Sir William ; “ pray tell us.”

“ Well, Mrs. Anne thought him looking poorly, and sent him, for change of air, down to the old carpenter’s under the hill. Jacko, not to be behind his betters, chose to fall in love with John’s wife, and breaking his chain, sprang upon the old dame, hugging her round the neck, chattering and grimacing like a dandy of the first water. This, not suiting the old woman’s fancy, she screamed as if the house was on fire. In rushed John, with his hatchet, crying out, ‘ Dang it ! I won’t stand this, but chop ’un down !’—‘ Don’t’e hurt the critter !’ she begged ; ‘ ’tis missus’s favourite !’—‘ Favourite or no, he sha’n’t play them pranks with my old woman !’ saying which, he seized him by the chain, and dragged him outside the

house, where he rewarded John for his pains by sticking his teeth into the calf of his leg, till he made him dance again."

As Mr. Howard finished this story, Mrs. Anne made her *entrée*.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I thought you would soon come down; and now, my dear Anne, as you have so long wished you had a daughter, your son Harry has provided one for you, and just to your taste, for she has been nursing your cat already;" saying which, he took Mary by the hand and led her to Mrs. Howard, who received her most affectionately. "There, take her away now, and show her all your pets, whilst I and Sir William walk down to the stable before luncheon."

"Well, sir," enquired Sir William, "how do you like Harry's choice?—Is she not all I represented her to be?"

"Yes, Sir William, she is, indeed, to all appearances; and from what I have heard, I don't think her an impostor. But how you

could resign her so readily 'yourself, I cannot conceive.—It is more than I should.”

“There you err, my dear sir ; *she* gave me up, or, at least, she never would have accepted me.”

“Well, you are a noble-minded young fellow, to waive your chance, which is a good one, I think. But now to catch Harry—he will receive my letter on Thursday morning, and return on Saturday about midday, so you must ride over at luncheon time, or he will give us the slip, for he is uncommonly out of order just now.”

This being agreed upon, they returned (after inspecting the stables) to the house, where a splendid luncheon awaited them, consisting of all the delicacies of the season ; after partaking of which, Sir William and his fair friend returned home, delighted with Mr. Howard's kind reception and hospitality, which formed the topic of their conversation in their ride back to Elm Grove.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY BEAUMONT and Mrs. Selwyn did not return from their drive until a short time before the dinner-hour, when Sir William said that thinking Miss Maitland's head-ache would be relieved by a ride, he had prevailed on her to accompany him on horseback, and hoped Mrs. Selwyn would not be offended at his taking such a liberty.

"Oh, no, Sir William," she replied, evidently pleased; "I can safely trust her under your protection; and she is quite welcome to ride with you whenever she likes."

Sir William expressed himself much flattered

by the compliment paid him, and the subject dropped, affairs wearing, in Mrs. Selwyn's eyes, a most satisfactory aspect until the Saturday morning, when he again expressed his intention of riding over to Beechwood, in the hope of finding his deliverer, who, he was told, might probably return on that day.

Mrs. Selwyn looked much annoyed at this intelligence, of which Sir William took no notice; and he rode off without any servant, saying he should quickly return. Before reaching the house he met Mr. Howard himself on horseback, who acquainted him with Harry's return, and that he was then busy in the kennel.

"So now, to catch the young dog, we must put our horses up in the farm stable, and then, Sir William, I shall have him in the trap I have laid to catch him."

Mr. Howard having conducted Sir William into the house by a circuitous route, left him in the drawing-room, desiring him not to look out of the window until he returned with his son, with whom he was soon seen walking arm-in-

arm, having informed him that a very particular friend was waiting to see him in the drawing-room.

“Who is he?” asked Harry.

“The best friend you ever had in the world, except your old father, so come along;” and thus he was suddenly ushered into Sir William’s presence. Harry stood for a minute transfixed to the spot, without regarding his rival’s approaching step, but turning to his father, said reproachfully—

“You have betrayed me,” and was quickly leaving the room, when Mr. Howard, placing himself before the door, interposed.

“No, Harry, I have not betrayed your honour, which is as dear to me as my life, and that, you know; but your father’s word has been pledged to Sir William Beaumont, that you should listen to some explanation he has to make. You alone can make me do what I have never done before, fail to fulfil my promise. The door is open; you can go now, if you please.”

Harry turned instantly, and confronting Sir William with a look of mingled hauteur and sarcasm, said—

“My father’s word *commands* his son’s attention; but I beg not to be detained longer than necessary.”

Sir William gazed in surprise at the erect and proud youth before him, his eye glancing with indignant impatience; and for a moment the thought crossed his mind, “Can this man be Mary Maitland’s choice?”

“Mr. Henry Howard,” said Sir William, calmly, “I have sought this interview to express my personal thanks and deep gratitude for your brave conduct in saving my life, and also to disabuse your mind of certain impressions with regard to my position and intentions towards Miss Maitland.”

“For the former, Sir William,” he said, haughtily, “I require no thanks; and for the latter, desire no explanation.”

“But, Mr. Howard, both in justice to myself and that young lady, some explanation is neces-

sary, as I cannot permit her conduct or mine, even, to be misrepresented."

"I am not aware," replied Harry, "that I am amenable to the charge of making misrepresentations. Your attentions to Miss Maitland are the common topic of conversation in the neighbourhood; you are seen walking and riding with her alone, the latter a privilege never conceded to me, even when engaged to her. Mrs. Selwyn openly approves your addresses to her daughter, whilst, since your arrival at Elm Grove, she has treated me, intentionally, with disrespect, almost amounting to contempt. Such, Sir William, are the plain facts."

"And yet, Mr. Howard, notwithstanding all these appearances, my attentions to Miss Maitland are simply those of a friend, and I never shall or can regard her in any other light."

"Friendship with women is next akin to love," replied Harry; "this was precisely our feeling at first, which, on my part, has ripened into a firm and deep attachment, which even her marriage with another can never wholly eradicate;

but enough of this—the subject is too painful to dwell on longer, and I must beg now to be excused listening to any further remarks ;” saying which, he was turning to leave the room, when Sir William exclaimed,—

“ Stay, Mr. Howard, one moment longer ; in common justice and courtesy, hear my defence ; that, at least, as a gentleman, you cannot refuse.”

“ Well, Sir William, then pray be brief.”

Sir William then related all particulars from his first meeting with Miss Maitland, and his discovery of her mother’s disapprobation of her engagement to him ; and how he had come down to Elm Grove for the express purpose of effecting a reconciliation, and obtaining Mrs. Selwyn’s approval of their union, slightly alluding to his interview with his father, and his kind offers of co-operation ; “ and now,” he said, “ judge me wrongly if you will.”

Harry listened attentively to this his recital, and then extending his hand, instantly exclaimed,—

“ Forgive my hasty expressions, Sir William.

I have indeed wronged you, for I could not believe any man capable of such generous conduct. Words of thanks are a poor offering for such a service as yours, but my lasting gratitude you must ever retain ; and yet I cannot be beaten in generosity, even by Sir William Beaumont. Such, no doubt, were at first your feelings and intentions towards Miss Maitland and myself—may they not, as well as hers, have undergone a change ?”

“No,” he said, “I regard her as a sister.”

“So did I once,” replied Harry, “but other feelings soon supervened ; this would be the case with you, were Harry Howard not in the way ; and as you are so much better calculated to make her happy, I resign all pretensions to her hand, and, in doing so, know I shall be rendering her the most essential service, and afford the surest proof of my disinterested love. In short, what with Mrs. Selwyn’s disapprobation, and my inability to marry for some time, I should be guilty of the grossest selfishness, did I hesitate to act otherwise ; and this I say after mature

deliberation, accompanied, it is true, with fierce conflict within — but all that is nearly past. Her true welfare has ever been dearer to me than my own life, and I will not a moment longer hesitate between duty and inclination.”

“And yet,” said Sir William, “you can think me capable of basely supplanting another man in his engagement, and that man the preserver of my life? No, Mr. Howard, did I love Miss Maitland with all the intensity of a first attachment, which I do not, and never can, knowing her betrothment to yourself, no power on earth should ever induce me to marry her; this I have told her, and now repeat to you—do you believe me sincere or not?”

“I cannot doubt you longer; your words and actions bear the impress of truth.”

“Then, Harry Howard,” said Sir William, “give me your hand, and be yourself once more — away with all this jealous heart-burning — will you accept me now as your friend?”

“That, Sir William, you have already proved

yourself; my turn is yet to come, to show myself deserving of your regard."

"To that you have also already entitled yourself, and as long as life is spared to me, I shall feel, for that life, I am indebted to you. But now ride with me over to Elm Grove, to relieve that dear girl from her load of apprehension; and besides, Lady Beaumont has made me promise to introduce you to her."

Harry expressed his reluctance to obtrude on Mrs. Selwyn after her late conduct.

"Oh, never mind that, all mothers are anxious to see their daughters well provided for—don't give her another thought, but consider that every moment's delay adds to your dear Mary's anxiety and suspense."

"Well, then, Sir William, I will be ready in ten minutes to accompany you."

The two newly-made friends were quickly in their saddles, conversing cheerfully and unreservedly, as if they had known each other for years, and soon arrived at the lodge gates, where the first person they met, just going out for a

solitary ramble, was Mary. Springing from his horse, Harry folded her in his arms, exclaiming,—

“Can you forgive me all my wayward conduct and unjust suspicions?”

“Oh yes, Harry, I do, indeed, from my heart, for I know you have not been so much to blame; but I hope you will never doubt me again.”

Having learnt from her that Mrs. Selwyn and his mother were gone out for a drive, Sir William rode off, leaving the lovers together, who walked leisurely back to the house, and remained in happy conversation for more than an hour, occupied with mutual explanations; when Harry rose to take his leave, saying his father would be expecting his return.

Sir William was vexed to find he was gone, on returning to the drawing-room, and said,—

“Master Harry is an odd compound of impetuosity and generosity, and I fear, my dear little sister, you will find more of the lion than

the lamb in his disposition ; still, he is a noble-minded, kind-hearted fellow, and I am sure I shall love him as a brother ; you see he is impatient of remaining here until your mother's return, knowing he is not welcome. Well, I think he is right, and I shall see him here again soon, I hope, on better terms."

Sir William informed Lady Beaumont that he had prevailed on Harry Howard to ride over with him to be presented to her ; but finding she had gone for a drive, he had, after waiting some time, taken his departure.

"I am so sorry," replied Lady Beaumont, "to have missed seeing him, but when will he call again?"

"That, my dear mother, is very uncertain—perhaps not before we leave."

"Then, indeed, you must drive me over to Beechwood, for I cannot rest happy until I have thanked in person your preserver ; see him I must and will."

"Then, my dear mother, I shall be at your service any hour to-morrow you like, and I very

much question which you will fall in love with first, the father or the son."

Hearing this proposition, Mrs. Selwyn immediately interposed, saying,—

"If you really wish so much to see Mr. Henry Howard, I will with pleasure send him an invitation to dine here to-morrow or the next day;" little doubting he would refuse her polite and formal invitation.

"Thank you, Mrs. Selwyn, I am really much obliged," said Lady Beaumont; "and if you will write the note, William will ride over with it."

"I cannot think of giving Sir William that trouble, but will send the groom after dinner."

Sir William, suspecting from Mrs. Selwyn's manner the sort of note she purposed writing, rode over himself to Beechwood, and apprized Harry of what he might expect, but entreating him to accept the invitation on his mother's account, who was so desirous of being introduced to him, and also, that by so doing, he hoped

soon to see him on good terms again at Elm Grove. Harry was, after much entreaty, at length induced to comply with his wishes, and Sir William returned immediately.

The next evening, about six, when the family party were assembled in the drawing-room, Mr. Harry Howard was announced. With an air of unembarrassed complacency (although a curl of the lip betrayed his inward feelings), he approached Mrs. Selwyn with a low bow, who returned his salutation by holding out two of her fingers, which he scarcely touched.

Sir William was sitting by Miss Maitland when he entered, and whispered to her,—

“Your friend Harry is quite the courtier to-night—I did not give him credit for such hauteur and dignity of manner. I fear my mother will think him only a man of the world.”

“He will not be so to her,” she replied, in a low voice; “but you must make allowance for the slights he has received from mamma.”

Turning to Lady Beaumont, Mrs. Selwyn said,—

“As your Ladyship wished so particularly to be introduced to Mr. Henry Howard, I beg to present him.”

Lady Beaumont rose at once, and holding out her hand, expressed her great delight at their meeting; “and how,” she added, “can I ever evince my grateful obligations to the preserver of my son?” while the tears stood in her eyes as she gazed on Harry’s face.

“Indeed, Lady Beaumont,” said Harry, respectfully taking her hand, “your appreciation of this trifling service far exceeds my deserts; I did only what any other man would have done in a similar case, and you will really oblige me by not again alluding to the subject.”

“Well,” she said, “although I must restrain, at your desire, the expression of my gratitude, it will never cease to be felt.”

Harry bowed, and then turning to Sir William and Miss Maitland, shook hands cordially with both.

As a set-off against Harry Howard, Mrs. Selwyn had invited the clergyman of the parish

to dine with them that day; and when dinner was announced (Mr. Selwyn handing in Lady Beaumont), she said,—

“ Mr. Wilson, will you take in my daughter ?” and then walking off with Sir William, left Harry Howard to follow alone.

Sir William felt indignant at this premeditated insult to his friend, and scarcely spoke to Mrs. Selwyn during dinner. Harry took his seat between Sir William and Lady Beaumont, with Mr. Wilson and Miss Maitland opposite. A heavy dullness seemed to have settled down on this badly-assorted company. Sir William continued gloomy and silent, and Miss Maitland, hurt at her mother's conduct, scarcely spoke to Mr. Wilson; when Harry, feeling himself to have been the cause, although the innocent one, of this unpleasant state of things, discarding all resentment and restraint, exerted his conversational powers to entertain, by which means, being ably seconded by Lady Beaumont, who was of a cheerful disposition, he succeeded in dispelling the constraint which prevailed over all. Even

Mrs. Selwyn was pleased, which Sir William observing, said,—

“We are all in such a silent mood this evening, that we ought to feel obliged by Mr. Howard’s efforts to enliven us.”

“Yes, he can make himself very agreeable when he likes,” she answered.

On the ladies leaving the dining-room, Lady Beaumont was profuse in her praise of Harry, and turning to Mary, enquired—

“How is it, my dear, you have escaped heart-whole with such an agreeable neighbour? in my opinion, he is just the person any young girl would fall desperately in love with. I am sure I should, in my younger days.”

Mary blushed; but making no reply, Mrs. Selwyn immediately added—

“There is something more than good looks and agreeable manners requisite in a husband, to make the married state happy; and the first consideration with any sensible woman, would be good connections, and a respectable establishment. Mr. Howard’s family is a very eccentric

one, and he has no home of his own to offer a wife, were any girl rash enough to marry him."

"There is much truth in your remarks," said Lady Beaumont; "still, with his father's property, I should imagine his son would be well provided for; and I must confess, had I a daughter, it would be a comfort to me to see her united to such a person as Mr. Howard."

"Perhaps you would think differently, if you knew his family and himself as well as I do," said Mrs. Selwyn, testily.

"William speaks most highly of Mr. Howard, and has taken a great fancy for his son; but if you think his acquaintance so objectionable, I shall caution him not to be too intimate, although we must both feel under the greatest obligations to him."

At this moment the gentlemen entered the drawing-room; and Lady Beaumont, soon after taking her son aside, whispered something which elicited this indignant reply, audible enough to all assembled—

"My dear mother, it is a cruel calumny;

really I cannot hear another word." Leaving her, he immediately joined Harry, and said—"I shall keep you to your promise of paying us a visit in the spring."

"That you know," he replied, "is contingent on one event."

"Which," said Sir William, "will never happen; so give me your hand as a pledge of your word."

The friendly intercourse between Sir William and Harry puzzled Mrs. Selwyn not a little; and from a knowledge of the latter's jealous disposition, she could not account for his friendly demeanour towards his rival, unless from a resolution on his part to resign all claim to her daughter, which she flattered herself was the case, from his continued reserve towards her, so perceptible in his behaviour that evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next morning, Lady Beaumont and her son had a long conversation relative to Miss Maitland, when the former made a full discovery of his views and intentions towards her and Harry Howard. Lady Beaumont felt greatly disappointed at her son's explanation, fully expecting he had succeeded in gaining her affections.

“ Ah ! my dear mother, you are not the only person disappointed ; for, to confess the truth, before the conversation I overheard between mother and daughter at Braybrook, my hopes, as well as yours, tended to the same point ; but from

that day I have combatted with my feelings, and subdued them. Even had I the power, nothing should induce me to be the cause of breaking their engagement to each other, which would be almost as bad as running away with another man's wife. No, no, my dear mother, it is all well as it is; there was not time for my heart to be very seriously affected, and now, in place of a wife, I have gained a sister and brother."

"Still, my dear William, I am exceedingly disappointed; we must now return to Braybrook as soon as possible, and I fear Mrs. Selwyn will be angry with your attentions to her daughter, which, I must confess, have been the cause of much misconception both on her part and my own."

"Mrs. Selwyn has no reason for complaint, after her unfair behaviour to her own daughter and Mr. Howard, and you, my dear mother, upon calmly considering the position in which I have been placed, with my earnest desire to promote the happiness of two young persons, in whom I have taken a deep interest, will acknow-

ledge that your son is undeserving your censure."

"Indeed, William, I do not blame you for your generous, disinterested conduct, although I must regret we ever came to Elm Grove."

"And yet," he said, "without coming here, my object would never have been accomplished. That being effected, I will return as soon as you like; but I must beg you will never divulge what I have stated, to Mrs. Selwyn, or she will visit her displeasure on two innocent persons, whom it has been my chief endeavour to protect. I alone am responsible for my own conduct; you cannot be supposed cognizant of my real motives and feelings, which, until this hour, you have never known."

"Well, William," replied his mother, "I can safely say, you have deceived me quite as much as others, and must defend yourself against all imputations on your character for playing the flirt."

"That I shall be quite ready and willing to do, whenever the charge may be preferred against

me ; but as the opposing party cannot come into court with clean hands, I shall not have much anxiety in preparing my defence. I have only to request *you* will not attempt it."

"Oh, certainly not, William ; I have nothing to say on the subject, and shall refer all complaints to yourself."

"Thanks, my dear mother, and now I must leave you, to write my letters."

Lady Beaumont sought Mrs. Selwyn, and communicated her intention of leaving for home the third day, as she had already trespassed too long on their hospitality. The usual fencing on both sides, common on such occasions, having been gone through, and another day conceded by Lady Beaumont as a compromise, which she thought might not prove displeasing to her son, this weighty matter was satisfactorily arranged.

On the day following, Sir William had accepted an invitation to dine with the Howards ; and at breakfast the next morning gave a most glowing description of Mr. Howard's profuse hospitality, and urbanity of manners.

"In fact," he said, "the dinner prepared for us, although only six in number, was of the most sumptuous description, and I could not refrain from making this remark to Mr. Power.

" 'Oh!' he replied, 'this is the usual style of living at Beechwood, and nothing out of the common run. The governor (as we call him) keeps a capital larder, and a good cellar of wine, and is never so happy as when he can gather a lot of youngsters about him to partake of his good cheer; they ain't sent empty away out of his house, and don't get the cholera from drinking sour claret.' "

"Really, my dear William," remarked Lady Beaumont, "Mr. Power has a very strange way of expressing himself."

"Yes, he is rather an odd compound; in other words, what is termed a rough-and-ready fox-hunter—at least, it is his desire to be so considered, in opposition, I believe, to the dandyism of the present day; for a more well-informed man, on general subjects, I have seldom met with."

“ Well,” she said, “ I have always understood fox-hunters were a very rough, unmannerly set of people, scarcely presentable in civilized society.”

“ Then, my dear mother, you have been most unquestionably misinformed. Amongst fox-hunters of the present time, you will find many of the most polished, courtier-like, and accomplished members of society, as well as those of the highest and best-bred families in the kingdom. The drinking, half-bred fox-hunters of the old school have entirely disappeared.”

“ Well, William, but how did you pass the evening ?”

“ Pleasantly enough ; for what with Mr. Howard’s amusing anecdotes of past times, his stories of the Prince Regent and the Court of that date, and John Power’s quaint remarks and eccentricities, it was as good as listening to a comedy, and I really must candidly admit, I never spent a more agreeable evening in my life, and can only regret we have not a few Howards

and Powers in our stiff, formal county. But as Harry and Power have promised to pay me a visit during the Ascot meeting next summer, I shall invite a large party of our grand neighbours, to convince them and you, my dear mother, that gentlemen may be fox-hunters, and fox-hunters gentlemen."

No further remarks were made or questions asked, but Mrs. Selwyn began to think she had been rather too hasty in wishing all the Howards at the bottom of the sea. On the last day of Sir William's stay at Elm Grove, Harry rode over to take leave, and was warmly received by Lady Beamont, whose first feeling of disappointment had given way to more generous sentiments towards the preserver of her son's life. This, coupled with the knowledge of his long attachment to Mary Maitland, and her son's increasing regard for both, overbalanced those little regrets which she had been indulging the last two days, that things had not turned out according to her hopes and wishes.

After sitting an hour, Harry Howard rose to take his leave, not having been invited by Mrs. Selwyn to dine with them, for very obvious reasons ; one of the most weighty being, that no interloper might be present to interfere between Sir William and her daughter on this their last night of being together.

The next morning, at an early hour, the Beaumonts departed from Elm Grove, and the carriage had scarcely left the grounds, before Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn were closeted in their morning room.

“ Well, Mr. Selwyn,” asked the lady, “ has Sir William proposed for Mary ? ”

“ Not that I am aware of, my dear ; certainly not to me.”

“ Very extraordinary conduct indeed,” replied Mrs. Selwyn ; “ but did he make no allusion to marrying, or anything of the kind, when you were sitting so long after dinner together last night ? ”

“ Why, yes, he did say that he believed he should remain an old bachelor, as he despaired

of finding any person who would suit him as a wife."

"Very complimentary indeed to our sex," said Mrs. Selwyn, with a toss of her head; "but his behaviour to my daughter is unpardonable, and Lady Beaumont's too, making such a fuss with her, and after such very particular attentions, which every one has been remarking. It is really too bad."

"Well, my dear, if he entertained any serious intentions, probably he has already spoken to Mary, or will write a proposal in due course to me or yourself, although I do not for a moment believe she would accept either Sir William or any other person, because of her long attachment and engagement to Harry Howard."

"I think differently, Mr. Selwyn; and judging from her behaviour to Sir William since his stay with us, not only hope, but believe, she has followed my advice, in preferring him to Mr. Howard."

"Then, my dear, you had better speak to Mary herself, as I do not pretend to be a judge

of young ladies' feelings, although I may express my own opinion as well as others."

This broke up the conference, and Mrs. Selwyn hastened to catechise her daughter on the same subject with no better result. Had Sir William proposed, or given her any cause to expect such a *denouement* after his very marked attentions?

"Really, mamma," replied Mary, "I did not expect anything of the kind, nor have his attentions to me been more particular than those of Robert Howard and others; besides which, being your guest, he might, no doubt, consider a little extra politeness requisite."

"Then you really mean to tell me, he has never expressed any warmer sentiments towards you?"

"Certainly not beyond those of a friend; and from what he said, I should think he would never marry at all."

Mrs. Selwyn felt exceedingly annoyed and mortified at Sir William Beaumont's conduct; and attributing his drawing back at the last to

the discovery of her daughter's engagement with Harry Howard, she resolved to vent her disappointment upon his head, and make him feel her resentment. Accordingly, the next time he called at Elm Grove, directions were given to the servant to show him into her morning room adjoining the hall, where she was generally occupied in writing letters and other domestic affairs until the hour of luncheon.

A few days after, Harry, thinking he might now venture on a visit to his beloved Mary, rode over early as usual, and was at once ushered into Mrs. Selwyn's presence. Rising from her chair, she met him with much politeness, and begging him to be seated, thus addressed him:—

“I have long wished, Mr. Howard, for an opportunity of speaking to you seriously upon the subject of your engagement to my daughter, which was permitted on my part under the full impression that your family's sanction had been obtained also; this now appears impossible to have been the case, since no overtures of any

kind have been made by them, and even the common civility of a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Howard has been omitted. It is therefore quite evident that you cannot have your parents' approval of your purposed marriage with my daughter; and I hope I possess too much pride ever to permit her entering a family who have treated us all with so much neglect, amounting, I may say, to contempt. If so truly attached to her as you profess to be, your own sense of honour and propriety would have prompted you to pursue a course the reverse of what you have adopted out of respect to her feelings, which have been as much wounded as my own; and as so many months have now elapsed since you solicited my sanction to your addresses, without the slightest approach or even allusion to the usual arrangements on such occasions, I must beg you will distinctly understand that from this day any future visits to my daughter will not be permitted by me, as I shall not allow her prospects in life to be sacrificed any longer, merely to suit your pleasure or convenience; and, as a

gentleman, I hope no attempt will be made by you at clandestine meetings or secret correspondence."

Harry Howard sprung from his chair, the blood mounting to his temples, when Mrs. Selwyn exclaimed—

"Stay, Mr. Howard ; I have only one observation more to make. You have already been the cause of Mary's rejecting two most eligible proposals from gentlemen of high family connections, superior attainments, and excellent characters, and, which we do not so much regard, of large fortune also. Their conduct have presented this striking contrast to yours, that they immediately sought an introduction of their families to Mr. Selwyn and myself, as a preliminary step to a nearer connection."

The few last words spoken by Mrs. Selwyn, enabled Harry to resume his composure, and stifle his rising indignation by remembering in whose presence he now stood ; when fixing his eyes steadily on Mrs. Selwyn, he thus replied :—

“ I regret most deeply, my inability to have prevailed on my father to pay the customary visit to yourself and Mr. Selwyn ; but, independent of his well-known eccentric character, with which you are well acquainted, I must in candour state, that his conduct in this respect has been unfortunately influenced by your son-in-law, George, who has, for purposes known only to himself, (but which may be partly explained by his cowardly connivance and attack on your daughter,) done everything in his power to prejudice him against Mr. Selwyn, although he has given his full sanction to our engagement. As to my regard and love for Mary, it has been proved as much or more by deeds than by words. When a young girl, I had long esteemed and treated her as a sister, and my affection has now ripened into an attachment, which no power on earth can eradicate or destroy, not even her marriage with another. Of high attainments I cannot boast ; but in sound and honest principles I hope I am not deficient, and, I may also add, that your own child is the first and only

one of her sex who has ever been enfolded in my arms, or pressed to my lips. I have little more to add, except, that dependent on my father during his life, as you know, he has offered me the choice of good preferment in the Church, or a home for myself and wife at Beechwood during his lifetime, and the property at his decease. A more kind and indulgent parent never existed, and I am quite sure he would welcome your daughter as his own child, and love her as tenderly. More, Mrs. Selwyn, I have it not in my power to offer; and deeply do I regret, for dear Mary's sake, that my worldly endowments come so far short of her deserts. This day, however, I shall release her from her engagement to myself." (Harry's voice faltered in spite of himself.) "But even when surrounded by all the splendour which riches or title can bestow, she will never find more enduring happiness and devotion than with him, whom you have now discarded as unworthy her preference. And now, Mrs. Selwyn, with many thanks for all your previous

kindness and hospitality, I will wish you farewell!"

"Stay, Mr. Howard. I did not intend to inflict pain or insult on yourself by anything I have said; of this I hope you will acquit me."

"Mrs. Selwyn," said Harry, gravely, "you have questioned every action and principle of my life, all that a man holds most dear—his honour—his honesty—his love. My worst enemy has never presumed to *insinuate* even such an accusation against me. I defy the whole world to prove a tittle of the charges you have preferred this day, and that man lives not who would dare to utter the imputations I have heard from your lips in this room. My pride, Mrs. Selwyn, is equal if not superior to your own, and my footsteps shall never again cross this threshold until I receive an invitation from yourself to return. One favour I must request, however, as the last I shall ever ask; a short interview with your daughter, to make her acquainted with the result of this morning's

conversation ; but even that interview can take place in your presence."

"No, Mr. Howard, I do not doubt your integrity or honour."

"Or my love either, Mrs. Selwyn, I suppose ; but that you will see is as strong as either ; for although releasing Mary, at your desire, from her engagement to me, I do not release myself. My heart is as firm as my principles, and having given that entirely to your daughter, it cannot be recalled. She is at liberty to act as she or yourself may determine ; *I never can or will marry another ;*" saying which, with a low bow, Harry quitted the room and the house to meet Mary in the shrubbery, where she had been awaiting with fearful apprehensions the result of his interview with her mother.

On joining his beloved, Harry's flushed face and excited manner revealed at once the nature of his tidings.

"Oh ! my dear Harry," she exclaimed ; "your looks tell me, too plainly, what has happened—I dread the worst."

"Pray, my dear Mary," said her lover, taking her hand and placing it through his arm, "compose yourself, and do not add to my distress. This is only what I have expected, since Sir William Beaumont left Elm Grove; but you shall hear all your mother has told me; and yet this and ten times more shall never alter my determination, or stagger for a moment my devotion to yourself."

"Oh, dearest Harry! those words are sufficient consolation, I care for nothing else."

An explanation was then given of what had passed between Harry and Mrs. Selwyn, at which Mary could scarcely repress her indignation, when her lover's honour and affection were called in question; but when she heard her mother's determination to break off their engagement, and forbid him she loved so devotedly ever entering her house again, all poor Mary's fortitude gave way, and she burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming—

"This is, indeed, too, too cruel. I never could believe mamma would have treated you thus.

Oh ! Harry—Harry, what can I do ?—my heart will break.”

“ Stay, my beloved girl—do not give way now—only listen to me one moment. By all I hold sacred, I declare no persuasion shall ever induce me to marry any other than yourself; and here,” as he drew from his pocket a little diamond ring, and placed it on her finger, “ that is a pledge between us, which I will never redeem but at the altar, and by that symbol I vow to love and watch over you as my wife, though the powers of earth were leagued against me;” with which, pressing her to his heart, Harry whispered, “ my only and dearest love, can I say more, or do you doubt me ?”

“ Oh, no—no, dear Harry, I am quite satisfied of your deep affection for me ; but to meet no more here, seems almost like our final separation.”

“ Come, come, my dear child, do not give way to despair ; your mother may soon relent, and if not, we shall, of course, sometimes meet at friends’ houses, and in our rides ; this she

cannot prevent ;—so having her permission for this interview, let us walk to the glen, as I shall use the privilege given me, until I see you in a more cheerful frame of mind.”

After walking an hour, the bell proclaimed the servants’ dinner hour, and they returned towards the house, before entering which, Harry pressed her he loved to his heart, once more, and taking her hand, said,

“When you look on that ring, remember Harry’s plighted troth, although he does not bind you by it; but, should your mother’s wishes prevail on you to accept another, you must then return it to me, as I have exacted no promise, and you are therefore at full liberty to act as you like.”

“That ring,” she said, “is a mutual pledge between us, and here I promise, it shall never be removed, except by the hand that placed it on my finger, or the hand of death.”

“Well, my beloved, my dearest, thanks are due for that confession,—so now may God bless and protect you—we shall, I feel, soon meet

again, for I will be ever near to watch over my treasure."

The next moment Harry tore himself away, and hastened to the stables for his horse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARY retired to her own room, pained and offended by her mother's conduct; and gave way to the anguish of her heart, weeping bitterly. Mr. Selwyn having just returned from a ride, at once remarked her absence from luncheon, and enquired,—

“Where's Mary, my dear?”

“In her room, I believe,” replied Mrs. Selwyn. “I have had a very unpleasant scene with Mr. Henry Howard this morning, and have forbidden him entering the house again as my daughter's suitor.”

“Indeed, my dear! I am sorry to hear you

acted so harshly to this young man ; your object might have been accomplished by more courteous means, I think."

"What courteous means, Mr. Selwyn?—pray explain yourself?"

"I should have worked upon his feelings first, and put it to his sense of honour and regard for Mary, not to stand in the way of any better prospects, which might be offered her ; and I think he would have seen the force of my arguments, and voluntarily released her from her engagement."

"It is not my ^{*}disposition, Mr. Selwyn, to ask, for what I have a right to demand. His immediate offer of a proper settlement on my child, or his instant withdrawal of all pretensions to her hand ;—that is all I required, Mr. Selwyn ; and, as he could not comply with the former condition, he was bound to accept the latter."

"Well, my dear, you have a right to please yourself. Mary is your own child, but I regret his expulsion from the house, to which I have been no party."

“What do you fear, Mr. Selwyn?—his anger or revenge?”

“No my dear, he has been most respectful to me, and I shall certainly shake hands with him whenever I meet him; but I must confess, I dread the effect of all this upon poor Mary—she is so attached to him, and I am sure will never consent to marry any one else, even if this engagement is broken off; and then her health is so delicate, that I do not think she can stand much harassing.”

“Very well, Mr. Selwyn, you had better tell every one you disapprove of my conduct entirely.”

“That I certainly shall not do, my dear; but I cannot help expressing my opinion to yourself, that after what has passed, and Mr. Howard’s saving your child from a fearful fate, you should have treated him with so little consideration or feeling, as to forbid him entering my house again.”

“So then, I suppose, if a farmer or any common person returning from market, had

rendered the same service, I ought to have accepted him for my son-in-law?"

"That is too absurd, my dear; but I certainly would never have closed my doors against that man; that's all I've got to say; so now we had better dismiss this unpleasant subject."

Mrs. Selwyn was greatly annoyed at her husband's remarks, and began to repent her hasty and unkind conduct to Harry Howard, dreading the unhappiness it would cause her daughter, whom she loved most fondly. Ringing the bell, she desired the servant to let Miss Maitland know luncheon was on the table. The man returned, saying his young mistress was in a fainting fit on her bed, and the lady's-maid attending her. In an instant, Mrs. Selwyn hastened up-stairs, and as her eye rested on the death-like features of her child, who lay motionless and unconscious before her, all her mother's feelings rushed tumultuously through her heart, and kneeling by her side, she cried—

"Oh my child!—my darling Mary!—speak, oh speak to your wretched mother!"

No answer was returned,—but a deep sigh at last escaped her lips.

“Oh my dear mistress !” said the lady’s-maid, “let me give her another spoonful of sal volatile, she will soon recover now ; but I once feared she was almost gone, and she would not let me call you.”

By applications of various kinds—eau-de-cologne to her temples, and other resuscitating remedies, which the kind-hearted Freeman was incessantly using—Mary began to recover consciousness ; her eyes opening, were fixed for a moment on her mother’s face, and then closed again. That look spoke volumes to Mrs. Selwyn ; — kneeling by her side, she whispered.—

“Rouse yourself, my darling child !—all shall be forgotten !—Harry shall be recalled !”

The magic of those words was soon apparent in her efforts to rise ; which Freeman, ever watchful, prevented, saying,—

“No my dear young mistress, rest a little longer, and take a few drops more of this ; you

will soon be better ; and now, ma'am, if you will leave her for half-an-hour with me, and send up a glass of wine by Hannah, she will be quite herself again."

On returning to the dining-room, Mr. Selwyn, who was still there, anxiously asked,—

" Well my dear, how is poor Mary ?"

" Better now, but she has had a long fainting fit."

" Ah my dear, this will never do ; you must use milder means, or something serious will happen ; pray take my advice, and speak kindly to her about Harry Howard."

" Well, Mr. Selwyn, I fear you are right ; and I must adopt a different plan."

She then poured out a glass of wine, which she carried up-stairs to Mary's room, and finding her better, desired Freeman to go to her dinner, while she remained with her daughter.

" Now, my dear child," said Mrs. Selwyn, " pray take this wine to revive you."

" Indeed, I cannot, mamma, I feel almost

choking;" and she began sobbing again, hysterically.

"My dearest love," exclaimed her mother, in great agitation, "pray compose yourself. I will write this moment to Mr. Howard, and beg him to come over this evening."

"Oh, mamma, you have nearly broken my heart. I cannot endure such unkindness, to one I love so dearly;" and again, and again, sobs choked her utterance, and she fell fainting on the bed.

Mrs. Selwyn was almost distracted with terror, and ringing the bell violently, Freeman rushed up stairs. "Oh, Freeman, she has fainted again, what can I do?"

"Leave her to me, ma'am, and send directly for the doctor; or stay, for the love of my dear young lady, send first for Mr. Harry, to gallop over here as fast as his horse's legs can carry him, or, dear heart, she will never survive this night; indeed, indeed, dear madam, I know all—there is no time to spare; send, pray send this moment for Mr. Harry."

Mrs. Selwyn rushed down stairs instantly, and begged of Mr. Selwyn to write a few lines to Harry Howard, requesting his immediate presence, as her daughter was taken seriously ill, and to lose no time in coming.

The groom instantly rode off full gallop, and fortunately met Mr. Howard riding just by the lodge gates ; and in ten minutes he was kneeling by Mary's bed-side, who still remained unconscious. By his direction the window was thrown open to admit the air, and every remedy at hand used to restore animation, in which he was assisted by Freeman, her old faithful servant, who had lived with her from childhood.

The desired effect was at last produced, and Mary awoke from her long stupor, to the happy reality of beholding her dear Harry bending over her, who, holding her hand in his, whispered,—

“ My own and only treasure, pray restrain your tears ; all is well again, and I will not leave you.”

About an hour afterwards, when Mary was

reclining on the sofa, with her lover seated beside her, the family physician was announced, upon whose entrance Harry rose, and left the room, promising to return. The doctor, suspecting the cause of his patient's illness, told Mrs. Selwyn, that her daughter required the greatest care, and that she must studiously avoid agitating her in her present weak and nervous state, or the consequences would be most serious.

During the doctor's visit, Harry had an interview with Mr. Selwyn, who expressed his deep regret at what had occurred, and hoped he would continue his visits as usual to Elm Grove.

"That, my dear sir," said Harry, "it is impossible for me to do, after poor Mary shall have recovered her present nervous attack ; although, for her sake, I shall not, of course, make her acquainted with my determination. You are aware, that solely on her account, and at your earnest desire, I am here now ; and to facilitate her recovery, I will call and see her till she is

perfectly re-instated in health ; but when that is effected, my visits to Elm Grove must cease, until Mrs. Selwyn deliberately recalls the harsh expressions she has used this morning, and of which, I am assured, you cannot think me deserving."

"Well, Mr. Howard, you must use your own discretion in this matter, as I do not interfere between Mrs. Selwyn and her daughter ; but for myself, I can only repeat, that at all times I shall be most happy to see you here."

"I feel grateful for your kindness and good opinion," replied Harry ; "and now, as the doctor is leaving, I will, with Mrs. Selwyn's permission, see Mary for a few minutes, and then call again to-morrow morning."

A recurrence of fainting fits retarded Mary's recovery for several days, during which Harry Howard continued his visits, and Mrs. Selwyn, alarmed by her slow amendment, cautiously avoided any allusion to the past, and even invited her lover to dine with them, to which he assented, for his beloved one's sake ;

although fully persuaded by her mother's behaviour to him, when alone, that her sentiments towards him remained unaltered, neither did any expression escape her lips of regret for her late conduct.

As the prospect of danger fades from our view, the feeling of repentance diminishes also, and we soon relapse into our former habits of thought and action ; so it was with Mrs. Selwyn, who, relieved from apprehension of immediate danger, by her daughter's returning health, did not desire to dwell upon the cause of amendment, but allowed her previous ideas again to take possession of her mind, with the fixed resolution of carrying them into operation.

Without her motives being suspected (change of air and scene being recommended by the physician at her suggestion), an excursion to the sea-side was immediately decided upon, and a house accordingly engaged at Weymouth, for a month or six weeks. Harry Howard having been apprised of this intended movement, when making his last visit to Elm Grove, although

easily divining the cause, carefully concealed his suspicions from his dearly-loved Mary, and endeavoured to persuade her of the benefit she would derive from the sea air.

"Oh, Harry," she exclaimed, "I do not require change, but shall soon recover now you are once more permitted to be with me."

"Well, my dear girl, it may be so, but your mother thinks differently, and she has also the doctor on her side, therefore you must comply ; but don't imagine for a moment, that a hundred or a thousand miles will make any difference to a foxhunter."

"And will you indeed come to see me there?"

"Yes, my dearest child, most assuredly. Sea-bathing has been recommended to Harry as well as to yourself."

"Indeed, dear Harry, are you serious?"

"Yes, indeed am I, and as sure to follow you to Weymouth, or the Lands End, if necessary, as the horse I ride has four legs."

"Oh, then I do not care," she exclaimed, cheerfully, "if you will promise to be there also."

“That I do most faithfully,” he replied, “within one week from the day you leave this place—so now farewell—but you must not mention my intended trip to the sea-side.”

END OF VOL. II.







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